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Conciliators of the Reformation

The Revd. Christopher T. R. Hewer,
L.G.S.M., Dip. Lit. Arch., P.G.C.E.

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Synopsis

This thesis sets out to show that there were men of conciliatory nature involved at the highest level of negotiations between the various parties in the 16th century Reformation. It focuses on Philip Melanchthon, the close friend and ally of Martin Luther, who represented the Evangelical cause in many colloquies. As the author of the Augsburg Confession he ranks among the greatest theologians of the period yet he was suspected of being too compliant and was at times called both crypto-Catholic and crypto-Calvinist. Melanchthon is unique in that he spent forty years of his life in discussions with humanists, Catholics and Protestants always seeking to find the middle way on which all men of goodwill could agree. Melanchthon was fired with a desire to reform a united Church but not at any cost. It is the mark of the conciliator that, while he will give unimportant ground wherever necessary, ultimately he will hold firm to his conscience and will not sacrifice his integrity for any apparent gain. A conciliator is by no means weak but rather the strongest of men.

Melanchthon was not the only conciliator. There were men of a similar disposition on all sides who will be referred to here in dialogue with Melanchthon. A special section is devoted to the last real attempt at reconciliation, the Diet of Regensburg. It is viewed through the eyes of Cardinal Gaspar Contarini, the Papal Legate. Contarini risked much in his attempt at reconciliation which was doomed to failure.

By following Melanchthon and Contarini along their tortuous paths the thesis will bring out the nature of conciliation, its

potential and analyse the Herculean effort which was expended in an attempt to restore the glorious unity of the Church with fidelity to the will of God as they perceived it.

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Introduction

For many who have not read deeply in the literature of the sixteenth century reformation it is a time of excess. People seemed to take sides vehemently and to be prepared to follow their opinions into extremism. Depending upon the reader's point of view it can be seen as a time of great wickedness, of wanton disregard for the truth, of arrogant self-opinionism or conversely as a time of heroic piety, of grace-inspired superhuman devotion to the cause of justice and truth in the face of overwhelming odds.

There is another side to the Reformation. While there were many hard men there were also conciliators who attempted by gentler means to find a way through the obvious differences to a mutually agreeable position while always retaining fidelity to their consciences. The stage was captured in history by the more colourful rumbustious men of both wings. We hear little of the mediators who were pained by the break up of Christianity and thus inspired to find a middle way. Their task was doomed to failure within the context of the sixteenth century. Politics and religious abuse had conspired under divine guidance to make this a time of vigorous exchange of ideas and rapid entrenchment. The conciliator was liable to be caught between both camps. His destiny was to be by turns distrusted and then despised as a deviant from the path of righteousness. Only rarely were there moments when the cool light of reason illuminated the middle way so that all men of integrity could see the veracity of the conciliator's point of view.

Many of these conciliators had their foundations in the "new learning". They were humanists after the school of Erasmus. The Humanist

himself belonged to an earlier generation. He was not slow to point out errors in the medieval Church but the idea of breaking away from the Catholic fold was not a real option for him. He inherited the mantle and shared in the vision of earlier humanists such as Rudolf Agricola and Reuchlin. All three were of the same religious generation: dedicated to the reform of the worlds of theology and learning and through this of the Church. This is typified in Erasmus' theory of education. He wanted to combine *humanitas*, a study of learning to develop the full potential of man, with *pietas*, reverence for the Christian virtues.⁽¹⁾

The humanists in general were ill-disposed to become Protestants. Following the example of the classical authors they were optimistic about the basic goodness of man. They put man at the centre of the universe with the idea that he should embrace all knowledge and control every aspect of his life by his rational will. To the Protestant mind this would inevitably lead to man's self-justification by his own works. Although Erasmus would not discard his Christian heritage for the paganism of antiquity he did share with the ancients a belief in the basic goodness of man which could be refined and tapped for the benefit of mankind. In this way Erasmus, and humanists in general, were not predisposed to accept the Protestant notion of the utter depravity of unredeemed man. This can clearly be seen in the debate between Erasmus and Luther over the freedom of the will.⁽²⁾

When Luther launched his attack on the Pope Erasmus was horrified. He regarded the Evangelical religion as the death of all true learning⁽³⁾ and thus Luther was the author of humanism's downfall. Although there was no great rapport with Luther Erasmus felt that the Reformer should have a fair hearing. Although, in part, his move to Basle can

be seen as a desire to distance himself from the heat of the theological debate in the north.

For some time a truce reigned between Erasmus and Luther. Both agreed not to attack the other in print as long as there was mutual silence. Under pressure from the Pope and Henry VIII Erasmus felt he had to break this truce in 1524 with the publication of *De Libero Arbitrio*, 'On the Freedom of the Will'. Luther's reply, *De Servo Arbitrio*, 'On the Servitude of the Will', was published in the following year.

So, while many of the conciliators of the Reformation had their roots in Erasmian humanism they had had to move beyond the position of the Humanist himself. The first area where they had to find a middle path was between the idea of Man as seen by Erasmus: the free-thinking, free-acting, rational being who can tame the world by the power of his intellect, and the ideal of Man as seen by the Reformers: depraved, bound to sinfulness, unable even to turn to God for help without the action of God's grace.

The first of our three themes of conciliation then will be to reconcile the impetus of the new learning with the dynamism of Evangelical theology.

Our second theme of conciliation is the most obvious one between the Catholic and Protestant camps. Here again history has presented us with two diametrically opposed poles. This is far from the reality. Luther himself, who launched the Reformation was not given

easily to abandoning the old religion which had nurtured and sustained him. For him the struggle was intense and lasted for many years. Although he was not trained as a humanist he went through a phase of affecting the Greek name Eleutherius in an attempt to work out the strange dynamic into which he was being led. The example of his meeting with von Miltitz at Altenburg in January 1519 can be quoted to show the truly conciliatory attitude of the young Luther. Eventually, in spite of many attempts to find a less destructive path, he found himself with no alternative but to take his stance on scripture alone. His letters and conduct at various colloquies bear witness to the way in which he found himself forced by circumstances and fidelity to his conscience into permanent separation from Rome.

The path of separation from the old religion was easier for some of those who followed Luther. He cast the die of Evangelical Christianity which men like Calvin and Zwingli had no difficulty in developing into the Reformed Tradition. Not for them the anguish through which Luther had travailed.

On the Catholic side the ~~great~~ champions of dialectic like Johann Eck were secure in upholding the received position. For them the errors of the Reformation were to be refuted from the long-standing tradition of the Church. Right was on their side.

Again behind these hard men there were the conciliators who hoped that by reasoned discussion a suitable solution could be found. As far as this work is concerned the main conciliators in this scenario were Philip Melanchthon and Cardinal Gaspar Contarini but there are others on both sides of the debate who are worthy of mention. On the Protestant

side Martin Bucer led the Reformed Church party at Hagenau (1540), Worms (1540) and Regensburg (Ratisbon) (1541) where he was a moderating force. The same can be said of Johann Gropper who, from the Catholic angle, was involved in moderate conversations with Bucer in the same years. Likewise Julius von Pflug, who was largely responsible for the Interim of Augsburg (1548) which attempted to achieve a degree of provisional reconciliation and thereby religious peace.

Our final theme of conciliation occurs within Protestantism itself. There were many shades of opinion among the reformers and attempts were made to reconcile the moderate views of Luther with the more reformed ones held by Calvin and the radical theology of Zwingli. Beyond this point on the theological spectrum attempts were also made to win round the extreme views of the Anti-Trinitarians and Anabaptists. Prominent among the attempts at conciliation among these groups were those of Philip Melanchthon and Martin Bucer.

As a means of exploring conciliation around these three themes it is intended to look at two key conciliators. Philip Melanchthon stands in the unique position of being a conciliator between all the factions of the Church in continental Europe in his day. He was a humanist, as such he attempted to reconcile humanists and humanism with the reformed religion. He was an Evangelical, and was central in every major discussion which took place between representatives of the old religion and the new. He was a Lutheran, and entered into dialogue with representatives of other Protestant Churches in an attempt to draw all Evangelicals into one body. Melanchthon believed in a "middle way" to unity and peace upon which he believed that all men

of unity and goodwill could agree.

Gasparo Contarini was a Cardinal of the Catholic Church. He won renown as a theologian and humanist and engaged in written and verbal discussions with the reformers. From his presence at the Diet of Worms (1521) until the Jesuits closed the door on reconciliation through the Catholic Reformation he was an influence for moderation at the Papal Court. His final and most significant contribution to the "middle way" was his book *Epistola de justificatione* (25 May 1541) which was greeted simultaneously by Protestants as an acceptance of justification by faith and by Catholics as a compromise on the received position.

Together and separately these men laboured in vain to find some common ground to prevent the shattering of Western Christianity and thus provide us with an insight into the strong but unsung tradition of 'Conciliators of the Reformation'.

Part I

A biographical sketch of Philip Melanchthon

Chapter One: Early Formation

Philip Melanchthon was born Philip Schwartzert in the town of Bretten in the Electoral Palatinate on 16 February 1497. He was the oldest child of George and Barbara (née Reuther) Schwartzert. Bretten was one of the most important towns in the area. Its population was about 2,000 people who made their living by farming, tanning and weaving. Much of the early information about the life of Philip comes from the biography of his closest friend Joachim Camerarius who records his admiration for the morality and cultural interests of the people of Bretten at this time.

Philip always had a special feeling for his homeland. He felt that it contributed to the moral and religious upbringing of any child. He was always ready to give it consideration as for example when he was asked to arbitrate on behalf of the local peasants during the Peasants' War.

George Schwartzert was the Elector's armourer and renowned for his skill. He married Barbara, the sixteen year old daughter of John Reuther, Mayor of Bretten, in 1492 or 1493 in Speyer. There were five children in all, Philip being the eldest (1497). George died on 27 October 1508 after a long illness which many regard as being the result of drinking poisoned water in 1504. Philip was now eleven and he left Bretten to settle with relatives in Speyer.

Philip described his father as reserved, taciturn, loyal and pious. One legacy which he inherited from his father was a horoscope. It was common for fathers in court circles at the time to have horoscopes cast for their sons. Philip's was cast by John Vierdung of Hassfurt. Philip always maintained an interest and healthy respect for astrology all his life and he allowed the science and in particular this horoscope to influence several decisions. For example, when he was asked to go and supervise the reform in Denmark he remembered the presage of tragedy at sea if he went to the north and so refused to go.

Camerarius records Philip's affection for his mother whom he regarded as pious and intelligent. He is reported to have maintained a correspondence with her throughout her life but little of this correspondence remains. He saw her in 1524 and again, during a recess in the Diet of Speyer, in 1529.

Through his mother's side of the family, Philip was related to the great humanist and Hebraic scholar Reuchlin. He it was who recommended that Philip should be sent to study under John Unger whom Philip always regarded as a demanding first teacher who gave a great deal to his students. Later Philip moved to live with his maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Reuther, in Pforzheim. Here he attended the Latin School where he came under the influence of George Simler who was later to be his professor at Tübingen. During this year in the school, Philip perfected his knowledge of Latin and began the study of Greek. Reuchlin himself is said by the "Brief Account" (1560) to have taken a personal interest in his grand-nephew's education. He sent him books and Hellenised his name from Schwartzert (Black Earth) to Melanchthon as

was customary in the humanist circles of the day following the principle that the humanist was a citizen of the ancient cultures of Greece and Rome.

Philip matriculated to Heidelberg on 14 October 1509 at the age of twelve which was by no means unusually early. Founded in 1386 Heidelberg University was the oldest in Germany west of Vienna and Prague but it was not renowned for learning or culture in Philip's day. Here he lodged in the house of the theologian Pallas Spangel who introduced him to the works of his sometime friend Rudolf Agricola. After two years study Melanchthon won the degree of Bachelor of the Liberal Arts and then proceeded to read for his Master's degree. He applied for this when he was fourteen but was refused as being too young. Melanchthon then decided to transfer to Tübingen.

On the staff at Tübingen were Hildebrandt and Simler, under whose guidance Philip was to study. Here it was that he first met John Husgen (Oecolampadius) who was fifteen years his senior. Together they read Greek literature, especially the writings of Erasmus to whom they were attracted as a philosopher and stylist rather than as a Christian thinker. Melanchthon received his Master's degree in 1514 and then added theology to his list of subjects which included maths, law and medicine. Reuchlin was still a great influence on the young Master; he recommended him to begin the study of Hebrew and sent Philip a Latin bible which he read at every available moment.

Philip also read deeply in the works of the fourteenth century philosopher William Occam. Convinced with the Nominalist's arguments,

he became imbued with this thinking and sought to defend it in the ever-raging debates with the Realists, much to the satisfaction of Reuchlin. The Realists advocated a Neo-Platonic view of the world, e.g. the idea 'chair' was more real than a particular chair as it transcends time and exists in the mind of God. The Realists, therefore, supported traditional Catholic philosophy. The Nominalists were Neo-Aristotelians who denied that the general idea 'chair' existed apart from the particular chair. Melanchthon compared the Greek text of Aristotle with the Latin and came to the conclusion that the Stagirite had been misunderstood in the Middle Ages. He co-operated with Stadian to prepare a new edition of Aristotle's works with the participation of Reuchlin, Simler, Capito and Oecolampadius.

As a Nominalist Melanchthon came to doubt many Church dogmas. Occam said that universals do not exist outside the mind, they are subjective, intentions of the mind. They do not even correspond to the objective realities which call them forth. From this Occam concluded that reason is almost useless as a foundation for revealed dogma. He based dogma on faith without reason. Melanchthon pursued Occam's thought with interest but later found the intricacies of his system unsatisfying. (4)

As a young Master Melanchthon delivered lectures on the classical authors: Terence, Virgil, Cicero and Livy. He concentrated so avidly on Terence that in 1516 he could edit a new edition of his writings. After the death of Babel he became Professor of Eloquence and later corrector of the Anshelm Press. In this capacity he brought order to the manuscript of Naucler, the first rector of Tübingen.

Oecolampadius gave him a copy of the recently published 'Dialectics' of Rudolf Agricola. From this Philip learnt how to establish basic concepts (loci) and then deduce important viewpoints from them. It showed him how the context should be determined and in what order topics should be treated.

The peace of Tübingen was shattered for Melanchthon because of his association with Reuchlin and the authors of the notorious "Letters of Obscure Men". He became aware of how divorced from reality the traditional theologians were and how false were the foundations of the old dialectics. In May 1518 Melanchthon wrote in the foreword of his Greek grammar: "The studies which should shape one's intellect and behaviour are neglected, universal knowledge is nowhere apparent, what passes for philosophy is empty and fruitless deception which produces only contention. The true wisdom which came from heaven to guide the minds of men is banished." (5)

Soon after this Melanchthon came under suspicion at Tübingen so that all he did became a burden and he longed for another place to work. When Elector Frederick the Wise wrote to his friend Reuchlin asking him to recommend a suitable man to be Professor of Greek at the University of Wittenberg he recommended Melanchthon who was duly called and took up his post on 25 August 1518 at the age of twenty-one.

Chapter Two: Development of the theologian in Wittenberg

Wittenberg stood in a crescent of white soil on the banks of the River Elbe. The colour of the soil had given rise to the legend that its name (White Mountain) had been given to it by ancient Flemish settlers. At the centre of Wittenberg in Philip's day was the Castle Church with its vast collection of relics. The first royal chapel had been built in Wittenberg to house a supposed thorn from the brow of Jesus which was given to Elector Rudolf by King Philip VI of France. The Wittenberg chapel built in its honour was completed in 1353 and in the intervening decades thousands of other relics had been added to it by successive Electors who made a great deal of money out of interested pilgrims by putting the relics on exhibition. Elector Frederick the Wise decided to build a grander church to house his collection in 1490 and the Castle Church was completed in 1509. It housed 17,443 relics attached to which were indulgences amounting to nearly two million years. R.H. Bainton has calculated them exactly to have been 1,902,202 years 207 days.⁽⁶⁾

The University of Wittenberg had been founded in 1502 by Elector Frederick and was heavily endowed with the profits of relic revenue. It had attracted a number of young energetic men to teach there which had caused a flood of students to enrol. This produced a much more stimulating and conducive atmosphere than at Tübingen. The members of the faculty at Wittenberg were Martin Luther and Andrew Bodenstein (Carlstadt) (theology), Jacob Premsel and John Genkel (Thomistic philosophy and logic), John Rhagius and Otto Beckman (Latin Classics), Jerome Schurf (Law) and Caspar Borner (Mathematics and Astronomy). Melanchthon's salary was 100 florins which was meagre

for a university teacher at the time.

Philip was not the automatic choice for the vacant post. Luther, among others, had favoured Peter Mosellanus who was an established scholar and teacher. However, Melanchthon made a most suitable impression when he gave his inaugural lecture on Sunday 29th August 1518. His lecture was called "The Improvement of Studies" ⁽⁷⁾ and in it he detailed the historical plight of classical learning which, he claimed, had almost withered away completely by the time of the rise of scholasticism which had eroded it still further. To repair this he proposed the thorough study of Hebrew, Greek and Latin so that students could return to the original well-springs of the classics and Christianity. Theology must be studied from the original sources. He wished to replace the erroneous view of Aristotle which had been purveyed by the Scholastics with the true view taken straight from the sources. Melanchthon hoped that by concentrating on philosophy every improvement might come in life. He matured as a humanist and, in keeping with Erasmus, came to see religion as the Christian philosophy. Men had placed their own precepts in the centre of the stage instead of the sources and so Melanchthon was led back to the revealed source of scripture. Melanchthon said that he would begin his work in the university with a study of the works of Homer and the Epistle to Titus.

Luther was among the hearers at Melanchthon's inaugural lecture and he wrote to a friend that Philip was the David who would take on the Goliath of Scholasticism. Although Melanchthon hadn't been his first choice, Luther warmed to him now and gave him his full support. Together they would reform the students and studies at the university.

Philip felt the support of Luther most sustaining and felt that he was in a position to receive from his fellow academics as well as give to his students.

In 1519 the aging Reuchlin moved to Ingolstadt where he lived in the same house as John Eck. From here he begged Philip to join him but Melanchthon decided that he must heed the will of Christ and remain where he was even though he thus turned down the chance of returning to his homeland and inheriting Reuchlin's library. He could not countenance the idea of being separated from Luther. With this refusal Reuchlin broke off all correspondence with his young prodigy for fear of being drawn into association with heretical Wittenberg.

Under the influence of Luther, Melanchthon decided that he must look more deeply into the whole realm of theology. As a humanist he was influenced by a desire to get back to the sources and so began an intensive study of the scriptures. By so doing he was following the example of Erasmus who had said that the Church had to be reformed by means of classical study. In Italy the Renaissance had brought in Scepticism and Epicurianism but in Germany it brought faith and a higher morality. The difference in results lay in the fact that in Italy culture was sought as an end in itself but in Germany it was used as a means for the cultivation of theology and the advancement of piety.

Melanchthon was able to bring a whole new field of learning to bear on Luther's renewal of theology. With Philip's knowledge, Luther was able to develop a critique of Papal law with a sound historical

background.

In June 1519 Melanchthon, at his own instigation, accompanied Luther to his debate with John Eck in Leipzig. He wanted to attend the debate because he thought that the decision between the old and the new theology would take place at it. Philip went as an observer but was recorded as whispering many suggestions to the disputants. The records of the debate were sent to the Sorbonne in Paris for their judgement.

When he returned to Wittenberg Philip wrote an account of the debate for his friend Oecolampadius in which he showed his revulsion for Eck's manner although he acknowledged his gifts. Melanchthon's personal attraction to Luther was apparent although he couldn't say as yet how much of the Reformer's theology he could accept. This letter was published, much to the author's surprise, and drew a quick response from Eck to which Melanchthon replied: "When the holy fathers of the Church have conflicting views, they are to be judged by scripture which has a simplicity and unity. The Word is an anvil on which to test the doctrines and views of men. The Scholastics have turned the scriptures into a Proteus, a sea god who can change at will, they have turned the Word of God into a word of man". (8) In this way Philip was being drawn into the debate openly as a supporter of Luther's stand on scripture alone which must never be alienated by tradition.

In the summer of that same year Melanchthon was alienated from Aristotle and began to see Philosophical ethics as the worst enemy of grace. He now devoted himself to the study of theology under

Luther's guidance; thus he became the first philologist to devote himself wholeheartedly to the study of the scriptures.

In the summer of 1519 Melanchthon turned his attention to the Epistle to the Romans which he was to regard as the key to the New Testament. He applied the methodology of Rudolf Agricola and Erasmus to distinguish basic concepts and principal ideas. Rapidly Philip worked his way into the mind of St Paul so that by September 1519 he was able to submit twenty-four theses on justification to the university board which he was ready to defend for the degree Bachelor of the Bible. Among his theses he held that it was no heresy to disbelieve the doctrine of transubstantiation and regarded the sacrifice of the mass to be an accretion invented by man. Two seminal theses were: "That the Roman Catholic Christian needs no articles of faith except those furnished by the scripture and that the authority of councils is inferior to the authority of the bible".⁽⁹⁾ By now Philip was firmly established in the Evangelical tradition of basing his theology on the scriptures in preference to all other writings. Melanchthon was awarded his degree on 9 September 1519.

On 25 January 1520 Philip delivered a lecture entitled "Paul and the Scholastics" before the university, the Elector and his court, and Dr Jerome Brunner, the Imperial Ambassador. In this he developed a consistent theology based on the Pauline writings to which he said the Scholastics had added much obscurity. "As a boy I did some damage to my mind in pre-occupation with the literature of philosophers, which, I hope, the doctrine of Paul some day will repair. For according to my judgement those who think that the affairs of the Christian life are aided by philosophical literature are entirely wrong".⁽¹⁰⁾

The great impact of Melanchthon's entry into Wittenberg theology was due to his systematic training in the classics and philology which enabled him to be consistent in his conclusions, more so perhaps than Luther himself. He was certainly of a freer spirit than Luther as he felt himself to be less bound by the traditions of the Church and thus at greater liberty to shake off what had been devised by man but was unnecessary for salvation.

Melanchthon attracted so much attention that John Eck reported him to Frederick the Wise and said that the matter should be investigated. This drew an open letter from Melanchthon to John Hess of Breslau in which he set forth and defended his rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

The next three years were to see several books flow from the pen of Melanchthon. He had worked on two while in Tübingen. These were now published and show Philip as the reforming humanist who was now bringing the same spirit to bear on theology. The first of these books was called "Rhetoric" which Philip described as the art of speaking correctly and well. In his preface he said that everything depends on dialectics which teach the exact and artful investigation of a given subject and its application brings light and order in all matters. He rejected the logic of Scholasticism which had ruled this field. The second book was "Dialectics" which appeared in 1520 and gained fame even more quickly being adopted as a textbook in Heidelberg. This work was concerned with finding and isolating basic concepts which he defined as common criteria by the help of which one could establish what deserved to be emphasised in a given

subject. This device was inspired by Rudolf Agricola and Erasmus.

For all his high esteem of the ancient philosophers, Melanchthon was in no doubt that there was a vast difference between them and the Word of Christ. Human wisdom must be an aid not an obstacle to understanding divine truth. He had come to Wittenberg to renew Aristotelian studies by removing the mis-understandings of Scholasticism; now he rejected all the metaphysical works of Aristotle and accepted only the works on natural science. In Aristotle he found only dreams but in Paul he found truth.

At this time Melanchthon became the unreserved collaborator of Luther in his scriptural exposition. He edited his friend's commentaries on Psalms and Galatians and wrote prefaces to them. These prefaces were theological works in themselves. In his preface to Luther's commentary on Galatians, Melanchthon said that this book was like a Cord of Theseus which leads through the labyrinth of the entire scriptures. Melanchthon commended to his readers all the works of Luther who, he said, had succeeded most profoundly in drawing out what the apostle Paul had been talking about. In particular, he emphasised Luther's treatment of the Pauline doctrine of justification. He declared that the paramount reason for reading the scriptures was to understand justification. Of what use is it to know that God is merciful if one's own heart is not touched by the realisation that he is merciful to you? Melanchthon was never slow to remind his readers that they were living in a privileged era. The old ways of sophistry were over and had been replaced by the Word of God in scripture. Christianity had ceased to be an affair of science and the intellect and was now an affair of conscience and inner experience. The scriptures imparted

what was inaccessible to philosophy; a real insight into the mercy of God.

Luther confidently handed over to Melanchthon a share in his heavy workload while realising that Melanchthon did not simply repeat his teaching. In fact, said Luther, he'd like to send all the monks from his cloister to Philip's lectures. He was firmly convinced that, in this respect, Philip could achieve far more than he could himself, or several like him.

When the Bull excommunicating Luther appeared Melanchthon stood by him in the belief that this was what was called for by the will of God. He invited the students to attend the burning of the Bull outside the Elser Gate on 10 October 1520 by saying that this was perhaps to be the time when the Anti-Christ was to be revealed.

A polemic was written by Thomas Rhadinus of Piacenza to the German princes to make them wary of Luther. Melanchthon and Luther suspected that Jerome Emser, Duke George's secretary, was behind it and they decided that Melanchthon should write a reply under the pseudonym Didymus Faventinus. In this he called on the German princes to listen to the commands of scripture and nothing else. He impressed upon the princes that Luther did not intend to destroy the peace, rupture Christian unity or start an uprising in the Empire. He stressed that Luther was not departing from the early Church but rejecting only those things which had been devised by the mediaeval Church as innovations.

From his study of Romans, Melanchthon had isolated the important questions of theology as sin, law and faith. By the study of these

three one could see what justification was and how it was achieved. He was impressed by Paul's statement that man is unable to achieve righteousness alone. In his mercy God has sent Christ to bring man salvation. Faith in Christ makes man righteous, his conscience is quieted and his inner powers renewed. Although Philip had not yet interrelated the theology of justification by faith with other doctrines he was vividly aware of the change wrought in his own life by faith in Christ. This was for Melanchthon something of a conversion experience.

Philip decided not to write a commentary on Romans but rather a book of central points which could not be overlooked when studying the scriptures. For him, Christian knowledge is to know the demands of the law and that only in Christ may the power be found to fulfil that law. So his book was to be a systematic exposition of basic concepts which bring the Christian closer to Christ as the meaning of his life, solace of his conscience and redeemer.

In 1521 Melanchthon published two works: the *Loci Communes* and the *Passional Christi und Antichristi*. They differed greatly. The *Loci* was the first attempt at a systematic Evangelical theology and the *Passional* was a polemical book of popular woodcuts and texts, rather like a book of cartoons, contrasting Christ with the Pope as Antichrist.

Philip was influenced by Luther's seminal works of 1520 (especially the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*) in the writing of his *Loci*. His work started to appear in print in April 1521 in single sheets which were circulated among friends. The whole book was not

completed and printed until December 1521; the delay was due in part to Melanchthon's wish to work through new questions raised by Luther's debate with Latomus. Even as he worked on the Loci it is clear from his correspondence with Luther that Philip was undergoing a deep inner change of life. When the finished book appeared, Melanchthon felt that in many ways it was too elementary and he desired not to use the title 'Master' in connection with it. Even allowing for these weaknesses it was a magnificent work which set a whole new pattern for systematics. In four years it went through eighteen editions and was extraordinarily widely read. Luther commented that the book should be regarded as canonical and commended it to everyone who wished to study theology. It is clear from reading the Loci that it was powerfully influenced by the humanism of the ancients as well as Erasmian learning. Perhaps the greatest single accomplishment of the work was its clarity of expression in treating the new insights of biblical ideas.

The Loci Communes (or Theological Commonplaces) consciously departs from traditional dogmatics. Melanchthon starts with a portrayal of man; natural man has no power for good, through the fall he lost his love for God and is led by selfishness. From that time onwards the root of man's action is sin, even his love is poisoned by selfishness. He cannot attain salvation through freewill but only through predestination. God gave man the law so that he might know himself and be aware of his own perverse nature. Man cannot fulfil the demands of the law and so is lost in despair. In this situation the gospel reaches him as the word of forgiveness and new life. If a man believes the divine promise that Christ does everything for him, and does not doubt that Christ's righteousness is his righteousness, and Christ's sacrifice is an expiation for him; then he is justified. "To know Christ is to know his benefits".

Philip took up and developed two themes from Augustine. With Augustine (and Luther) he saw the nature of faith being trust in God and a readiness to serve God and one's neighbour. Also, with Augustine, he seeks to bring out the antitheses of law and gospel more sharply than Luther does. He asserts the importance of the law without which the gospel cannot be preached. The new man, filled with the spirit of God, needs the law no longer.

When he speaks of faith and the sacraments, Philip makes it clear that it is faith which justifies, not the sacraments, they are only signs of the promises and gifts of God given for the comfort and strengthening of weak consciences. In the Loci, Melanchthon speaks only of two sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism leads one out of the consciousness of sin to the certainty of grace. He interprets the Lord's Supper as a sign of grace for the comforting of consciences and so deems a special sacrament of repentance unnecessary. Melanchthon closes his work with several chapters on ethics in which he makes it clear that faith and love have to prove themselves in the world.

The *Passional* is a quite different work; it is a popular attack on the papacy as Antichrist after the style of the 14th century writers John Wyclif and John Huss. The *Passional* was a booklet of woodcut drawings by Hans Cranach with a text by Melanchthon. The Antichrist portrayal of evil was based on the Books of Ezekiel, Daniel and Revelation where it was the epitome of evil which rose to its highest pitch just before the return of Christ when it was overthrown and loyal Christians vindicated. The socio-economic-religious conditions of the 16th century made it easy to see the Pope in this guise. The drawings and text were printed in pairs opposing the way of Christ to the way of Antichrist.

Some examples are: 1. Christ being mocked, beaten and spat upon by soldiers and monks with a crown of thorns pressed onto his head; while the Pope is shown in royal splendour, a jewelled crown being placed gently upon his head, surrounded by dignitaries of every degree kneeling in reverent worship amidst booming cannon and buglers who add to the pageantry. 2. Christ washes and kisses the feet of his disciples; while the Pope is regaled in splendour with people lined up to kiss his toe. 3. Christ drives money-changers from the Temple; while the Pope is in the Temple as the head of a money-changing agency. 4. Christ ascends to heaven; while the Pope is thrown down to hell amidst joyful devils.

Luther was summoned before the Diet of Worms on 16 April 1521 and spent the next two days defending his doctrines and explaining why he could not recant. The Emperor announced the next day that he was going to take firm action against Luther so Luther left the Diet on 26 April a full month before his teachings were formally condemned by the Edict of Worms on 25 May 1521. After he left the diet Luther's life was at risk so he was taken into hiding at the Wartburg. This had to be done by means of the subterfuge of a kidnap as Luther was declared a heretic and outlaw and so could not be harboured legitimately by any loyal subject. However, the Elector intended to save his scholar from death. During Luther's absence, Melanchthon was left in Wittenberg as the leading theologian of the Evangelical movement. He composed a reply to the Sorbonne who had attacked Luther's theology and attempted to trace it back to several ancient heresies. Melanchthon called the professors of the Sorbonne 'false teachers' and accused them of hiding behind the authority of the Fathers and Councils because they

knew that they couldn't repudiate Luther from the scriptures. According to Philip, Luther could call on the support not only of scripture, but also of Hilary, Augustine and Chrysostom, the most important Fathers. He claimed that Luther agreed with the ancient councils but refuted the later ones which had declared themselves contrary to the scriptures. Luther was in fact in harmony with the whole of Christian tradition and it was only Aristotle and the Scholastics who opposed him.

From his exile in the Wartburg, Luther predicted that those who attacked him would now attack Melanchthon, but Philip said that he was prepared to accept this not just for Luther's sake but for the sake of the truth. Melanchthon saw clearly that the hand of God had been at work in Luther's writings and that, through him, God had shown his mercy and salvation to his people. Luther was invigorated by Melanchthon's reply to the Sorbonne and translated it into German for wider circulation. During his exile too, Luther had begun to work on the question of monastic vows while back in Wittenberg Philip had turned his attention to the same question because of the marriage of Provost Bernhard and the ensuing debate.

In September 1521 Archbishop Albert of Mainz's chancellor, Wolfgang Capito, came to Wittenberg to attempt a reconciliation with the Evangelicals. He shared a concern for Erasmian humanism with Melanchthon and so hoped to find common ground with him. He deplored Luther's vehement speech but Melanchthon defended Luther by saying that he was destined to this task by God and worked with the best possible conscience and wisdom. Capito challenged the principle

of the sole authority of scripture as obscure but Philip defended it and went on to attack the Scholastic view of man by saying that if freewill is not repressed then grace is obscured. Later, when Luther called on the Archbishop to abolish the indulgence in Halle, Melanchthon appended a letter to Capito which concluded; "You cannot deny that he (Luther) teaches the gospel; if you repulse Luther then repulse this also". (11)

Chapter Three: Struggles with Fanatics and Peasants

With Luther out of the way in the Wartburg many people felt so liberated by the reforms that they became fanatical and refused to wait for the logical reforms that Luther had prepared them for. Among these fanatics were Carlstadt, who had been a senior colleague of Luther's in the theology department at Wittenberg, Gabriel Zwilling, a monk from Luther's monastery and the Zwickau Prophets. It was a testing time for the young Melanchthon. He was left in a position of challenged authority without the support of the "captive" Reformer or the personal authority to govern these zealous spirits. The way in which he handled them and the effect which they had on him give us an insight into the developing personality of the Conciliator.

Carlstadt and Zwilling came to the fore as leaders of the people at this time and Carlstadt took on the leadership of the reform movement. Carlstadt had initiated a debate on celibacy on 20 June 1521 in which he argued that all priests should be married and those living with concubines should be forced into wedlock. According to 1 Tim. 5:9 he argued that those over sixty should not be allowed to enter a monastery while those under sixty should be allowed to marry and remain in their monasteries and nunneries.

After this three priests decided to marry; they were Jacob Seidler of Glasshütte, Bartholomew Bernhard and a minister from Mansfeld. All three were imprisoned and Seidler was executed on the orders of Duke George. Bernhard was saved from execution by a letter written by Melanchthon with Agricola, Carlstadt and the doctors of law at Wittenberg.⁽¹²⁾ In this letter they maintained that neither the Old

nor the New Testament forbade the marriage of priests or laymen; Paul counted it no sin to marry and in 1 Tim. he recommended that bishops should be married only once. The Apostles, Early Church and Greek Church had no requirement of celibacy. They concluded that for these reasons no man should be bound contrary to the law of nature and the Word of God to keep a vow for the sake of human traditions. This "Apology for Bernhard" was translated into German as "Priests may take wives" and widely circulated. It provided the theological justification for clerical marriage; Bernhard created the precedent and many priests followed suite.

In October 1521 the Augustinian friars of Wittenberg, under their leader Gabriel Zwilling, met in solemn convocation and decided to abolish private masses, restore the cup to the laity, abandon their habits, give up begging and transform all ceremonies inimicable to Christ. (13) In response, Elector Frederick asked his chancellor, Brück, to conduct an enquiry. Brück reported that Melanchthon and the other theologians were in agreement. The Elector realised that to abandon the mass would have serious legal consequences as there were many massing endowments and so he decided to set up a committee to study the whole matter.

The committee comprised of Jonas, Carlstadt, Melanchthon, Pletner, Amsdorf, Doltsk and Schurf. In their report of 20 October 1521 they recommended a restoration of the cup to the laity preceded by instruction for the people on the scriptural warrant for this. They said that private masses should be allowed to continue if freed from the abuse that the mass is a good work by which to win forgiveness of sins; which abuse had made the mass so commercialised that it appeared that numbers were what really mattered. Melanchthon emphasised

the importance of the Word in the sacrament and, following Luther's manner, he said that the sacrament appropriates the promised grace to the individual. The Lord's Supper is a sign but no work or sacrifice; this decisive point has been overlooked in the traditional form of the mass which had led to spiritual blindness.

On receiving this report the Elector sought caution and asked the committee to expand and reconsider the question. The new report, presented on 12 December 1521, did not retract but added a crusading spirit to their recommendations saying that all should seek to return to the practice of Christ and the Apostles. This would bring some offence and trouble but truth was worth the loss of a few legacies. The Elector was asked to allow the reform of the mass "so that he himself might not be rejected on the last day". Although nearly all the Wittenberg professors were in favour of the reforms, the Chapter of Canons in Wittenberg, with the exception of Provost Jonas, were opposed. In an attempt to play for time and avoid division the Elector asked the committee to reconsider their report until unanimity was reached.

During these final stages, on 4 December 1521, ⁽¹⁴⁾ Luther made a clandestine visit to Wittenberg where he lodged with Melanchthon and discussed with him the current state of the reform and future plans. This meeting resulted in Luther's tract "An earnest exhortation for all Christians".

In October 1521, Melanchthon had published his "Sixty-five propositions on the mass" ⁽¹⁵⁾ in which he denied that it was a

sacrifice of Christ; this had happened once and for all on the cross. He denied that it was a good work gaining merit; justification was by faith alone. He claimed that the New Testament sacraments are baptism and the eucharist which are both signs of God's gracious gifts through Christ. He permitted private masses to continue so long as they were not regarded as means of coercing God or buying one's way to heaven.

On 27 December 1521 a group of fanatical weavers arrived in Wittenberg from Zwickau. They believed that they were possessed by the Holy Spirit and stood under direct divine guidance so that they no longer had need of the words of scripture. They appeared before Melanchthon and he was perplexed by them and did not know how to respond. He invited them to talk to him so that he could observe them and listen to their teaching. It soon became clear that they were possessed by some spirit but Melanchthon could not decide whether it was the Spirit of God or not. There seemed to be inconsistencies in their teaching which led Philip to be gravely suspicious. He wrote to the Elector to ask for Luther's return so that he could decide about them. Luther replied to Philip's request by telling him to "test their spirits and see if they come from God". Knowledge of heavenly truth, he said, comes to a person only through intense inner struggle. Melanchthon felt incapable of formulating a judgement on the Prophets but perceived that their enthusiasm rested on self-stimulation and self-deception. The Zwickau men had shifted the Evangelical emphasis from faith to possession of the Spirit and had abandoned infant baptism; moves with which Philip could not concur.

Carlstadt now came to the support of the Prophets and showed himself open to their tendencies. He had already demanded, in addition to the simplification of the mass, that all education should be shunned on the grounds that Christ and the Apostles were not educated and that the gospel was promised to the simple not the wise. He had urged the students to leave the university and learn practical trades and had himself gone among the peasants asking them to explain various passages of scripture to him, to which request he received the reply that that was his job!

With the support of Carlstadt, the provocative speeches of the Zwickau Weavers led to the smashing of images inside and outside the Town Church and the despoiling of gravestones. They were guided by the words of scripture "God in Spirit" and "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image". These outrages brought an official protest from Duke George. The Elector sent word to Philip asking him to curb Carlstadt, Zwilling and the Prophets but Melancthon felt himself to be powerless. He saw a storm arising in which divine and human elements were confused. He feared that "the light which had arisen in the world only a short time before would soon disappear again from our eyes". (16)

In January 1522 the university faculty and Town Council met to reform the mass in the hope that this would quieten the fanatics at work in their town. The revised order was: (17)

Hymn

Introit

Gloria

Epistle

Gospel

Sanctus

Preaching

Words of consecration in German

Admonition by the priest that all who feel oppressed by sin, all who hunger and thirst after the grace of God, may receive the body and blood of Christ.

Communion

Agnus Dei

Hymn

Benedicamus Domino

However, this did not quieten all disturbances and on 13 February 1522 Elector Frederick made a solemn request that images be unmolested, begging reconsidered, the mass kept in its essentials and Carlstadt forbidden to preach.

Fanaticism was rife in the town and on 1 March 1522 Luther received an urgent summons from the Town Council to return immediately and put an end to the disturbances. Luther saw this as a message from God and returned at once. After spending a couple of days assessing the situation he preached a series of eight consecutive sermons in Wittenberg. (18) These were masterful pieces of pulpit oratory in which Luther preached in the name of freedom and love against papal tyranny on the one hand and fanaticism on the other. He established the principle that if a thing does not violate the Word of God it may be tolerated and men may do as they chose. This applied to marriage, burial, cloisters, private confession, images, liturgical forms and monastic vows among other things. He insisted that force must not be used to further the reform but only the power of the Word. In

instituting both kinds in the eucharist especially, restraint should be used so that love might follow the celebration not violent disturbances.

Carlstadt was silenced and left Wittenberg to assume the life of a peasant. Later he disputed with Luther over the eucharist and was ordered out of Saxony, eventually becoming an outcast in most of northern Europe. Zwilling confessed his errors and seemed a changed man. Luther later recommended him as pastor in Altenburg. The leaders of the Zwickau men, Stübner and Cellarius, after harsh words with Luther and Melanchthon, left in a rage. The Town Church remained reformed but the Castle Church retained the relics and the old mass with loyal papal priests. The mass was not abolished until 2 December 1524 and some papal rites were retained until 1543. Luther appealed to the Elector to prohibit the mass in the Castle but he received the reply that he himself had said that only the gospel and not force should be used in such matters. Luther returned to live in the Augustinian house and resumed the Augustinian habit.

It is worth pausing at this moment to consider Melanchthon's performance as acting leader during Luther's absence. He was certainly very young and inexperienced at the time and it comes as no surprise that Carlstadt should see himself as the natural leader of the reform. Melanchthon's central position though is attested by the Elector's constant referral to him and Luther's clandestine visit to discuss happenings. Philip displayed a certain weakness and equivocation over the Zwickau men for two main reasons. Firstly, he felt himself to lack the charisma of absolute authority which Luther possessed and so felt the need to tread warily. Secondly, he needed to think

through the theological challenge which these men represented especially in their opposition to infant baptism. He regarded faith as a personal act and, as an infant could not make this personal act, he could not see how the sacrament could benefit the individual without faith. Children cannot exercise faith themselves and vicarious faith cannot benefit them. He recalled that Augustine had had similar problems in this matter and had ended up denying infant faith and falling back on the doctrine of original sin and custom. Philip accepted this as his first position on the question but was to work it through more thoroughly in later years particularly with reference to the Anabaptists.

The civil revolt and disturbances which accompanied the preaching of the Prophets were to have a lasting effect on Melanchthon. He came to regard this as a social evil which followed in the wake of fanatical preaching. Perhaps the memory of his youthful failure to curb the Zwickau Prophets and the civil destruction which followed begins to explain why Philip was always extremely harsh in his dealings with the Anabaptists and regarded their socio-economic reforms as most seditious.

With the return of Luther and the departure of Carlstadt there was a great deal to be done to set the theology faculty at Wittenberg on its feet. During Luther's absence Melanchthon had taken on lecture courses on Colossians, II Corinthians and John's gospel in addition to his work in the Faculty of Arts. Luther had shown his approval of Philip's expository work when he had stolen Philip's lecture notes on Corinthians in 1521 and published them against the

author's will. In the preface which Luther wrote to accompany them he said that Philip had rendered the work of Jerome and Origen as mere trifles and undercut the work of Aquinas. He regarded the notes as the next best exposition to St Paul himself. The action was repeated in 1523 when Melanchthon refused to publish his notes on John.

The first thing that the reformers did was to closet themselves together to work through the German translation of the New Testament on which Luther had been working in the Wartburg. This work was printed in 1522 as the "September Testament".

After this Philip wanted to give up his work in the theology department. Some critics have claimed that he wanted to retreat from the Evangelical doctrines and return to the quiet world of humanism. There are other reasons which seem amply to explain this desire. On 25 November 1520 Philip had married Catherine Krapp, the daughter of Hans Krapp, tailor and burgomaster of Wittenberg. Since his marriage Melanchthon had been short of money. His salary was still one hundred florins which he received for lecturing in Greek. He had to take private students to augment his income. Eventually in 1526 the new Elector John awarded Melanchthon a double salary of two hundred florins provided that he would lecture daily in Greek and help out as much as possible in the theology department.

Another reason for Philip's desire to withdraw from theology in 1522 was that he felt he should devote himself to the linguistic preparation of students for the ministry. How could they be expected to progress in knowledge without a thorough grasp of Hebrew, Greek and Latin which were the keys to the theological sources. (19) Finally

Melanchthon's health was suffering as a result of overwork. In 1524 he wrote to Camerarius: "I sit at home like a lame shoemaker. In my state of health, this worries me". (20) He grew thinner and frequently complained of insomnia so that in 1524 he had to take a short rest. This rest was taken in Bretten with his mother. It was on his return that he met Philip of Hesse and agreed to launch the reform in Hesse with "An outline of the restored Evangelic doctrine". The two Philips were on good terms from this time onwards.

After 1526 when Melanchthon had rested, received the extra salary and was no longer burdened by a double teaching load, he didn't complain of teaching theology which seems to indicate that these practical reasons were responsible for his earlier reluctance rather than shrinking back from the doctrines of the reform. He sought to realise his ideal of classics serving theology and his publications show the breadth of his lectures: Cicero, Hesiod, Hömer, Pinder as well as Paul, Matthew and John.

In the Spring of 1523, Carlstadt launched a further tirade against Luther from his exile in Upper Germany. Philip had developed a profound distrust of Carlstadt after his rejection of all learning in Wittenberg so that he now dissociated himself sharply from Carlstadt's claims and saw him only as a fanatic being possessed of no genuine integrity and working from totally impure motives.

Likewise Thomas Müntzer launched a fanatical attack on Luther and entered into correspondence with Melanchthon. It is not clear whether they had met in 1522 but his present claims reminded Philip of the Zwickau men. Müntzer claimed that men should pay no attention to the outward letter of the gospels but listen instead to the inner

word which God speaks to the living soul. Philip was in no doubt that Müntzer had been led into error by his conceited spirit.

Melanchthon wrote a popular "History of Thomas Müntzer", which was not an academic dissertation on his theology, but was designed to show people the ends to which Müntzer was led by his fanaticism.

Müntzer had been a preacher in Zwickau in 1520 but had been expelled because of his subversive preaching. After a brief sojourn in Bohemia, where he sought to establish a "spiritual church" among the Hussites, he was again expelled and came to Alstedt from where he launched his attacks on Luther. After these attacks had failed and Luther had him expelled (1524) he went to Mühlhausen where he preached open revolt, led his rebels to join up with the Peasants' Revolt and was finally captured and executed after the battle of Frankenhausen in 1525.

It is important to see these early clashes with fanaticism as the seedbed from which grew Melanchthon's later attacks on all Anabaptists. He saw them all as stemming from the same spirit as the Zwickau Prophets and Müntzer, they were men who treated the biblical revelation with contempt. Whether their motives were rationalistic or enthusiastic he delivered the same judgement: they were disseminating new teachings which would corrupt the planting of God. Like Luther, Melanchthon taught that man must look first to God and his revelation rather than to himself. To this end God had equipped men with weapons against unbelief, despair and death. Such a gift, to a special degree, was baptism, whether for children or for adults, it was a sign of divine grace. The Anabaptists, in Philip's opinion, taught only uncertainties and presented a doctrine of works without Christ.

Peasant riots were almost endemic in Germany prior to the Peasant's War of 1524-1525. Groups of peasants would rise against their oppressors in the guise of barons or bishops, these uprisings were put down by the private armies which such magnates retained. Luther's teaching of the need for people to reform ecclesiastical practices caught the imagination of the people who, whipped up by the fanatical preaching of men like Carlstadt and Thomas Müntzer, rose en masse with a socio-religious fervour. Luther loathed violence and travelled the country trying to lower the temperature and turn men from bloodshed to a reliance on the power of the Word alone. His words were of no avail as the movement had taken hold of the peasants and incited a taste for blood and settling old scores. Luther was horrified at the barbarity of their fervour and wrote the most vehement attack: "Against the murdering thieving hordes of peasants". He called on the princes to "brandish their swords, to free, save, help and pity the poor people forced to join the peasants; but the wicked, stab, smite and slay all you can". (21) "These times," he wrote, "are so extraordinary that a prince can win heaven more easily by bloodshed than by prayer". (22) "You cannot meet a rebel with reason," said Luther, "your best answer is to punch him in the face until he has a bloody nose". (23) Melanchthon, in his rather more restrained manner, supported the stand taken by Luther and was, if anything, even more inclined to the side of "legitimate authority and the God-given right to govern".

The demands of the peasants as drawn up in 1525 were:

- "1. The right to choose their own pastors who should preach the gospel purely and plainly without additions, doctrines and ordinances of men.

2. Exemption from the small tithe (the tithe of grain they were willing to pay for the support of their pastors).
3. Release from serfdom since they as well as the princes had been redeemed by the blood of Christ.
4. The right to fish and hunt, since when God created man he gave him dominion over all the animals, the fowl in the air and the fish in the waters.
5. A share in the forests for all domestic uses.
6. A mitigation of all feudal services.
7. Payment for labour in addition to what the contract requires.
8. Reduction of rents.
9. Security against illegal punishments and a desire to be dealt with according to the old written law.
10. The restoration of the meadows and the corn which at one time belonged to a community.
11. The abolition of the right of heriot by which widows and orphans have been shamefully robbed.
12. The resolution to submit all these articles to the test of scripture, to retract one or all of them if found not to agree with the Word of God." (24)

The Saxon peasant army was defeated at Frankenhausen in May 1525 and Müntzer was executed. After this the peasants were crushed, often with savage brutality, all over Germany and the war was at an end. It had threatened to alienate the Evangelicals from the princes who could have been persuaded that to allow a reform of religious practices and belief would automatically lead to open rebellion on the part of their subjects. By their total opposition to the carnage and

violence on the part of the peasants the reformers maintained their relationship with the princes but at the cost of an estrangement from many of the peasant peoples. Nevertheless, their stand reinforced the theological right of the princes to govern. Things were slightly compounded by Luther's marriage to Katherine von Bora at the height of the Peasant's War on either 13 June 1525 ⁽²⁵⁾ or 17 June 1525. ⁽²⁶⁾ Melanchthon feared that this was not opportune and would provide ammunition to be used against Luther in the wake of the war.

Melanchthon had now established himself as a leading theologian of the Evangelical Church. He continued to grow in maturity as can be seen by the way in which his *Lôci* was revised over the next thirty years. The *Loci* of 1521 was the statement of a young man newly converted to the reform. By 1527, when he wrote his commentary on Colossians, he changed his starting point for a theological system from predestination to the doctrine of man. He emphasised this view, which he regarded as essentially Pauline, in his commentary on Romans in 1532. It was this growing maturity which led him to revise his *Loci* in 1535, a work which went through six printings in as many years. He had come to a deeper awareness of the importance of tradition, the witness borne by the Church through the ages to the truth of scripture. He developed the schema of presenting the teaching of scripture on a given question and then tracing this through the Fathers. The place of freewill became more and more important in his theology as he developed John Chrysostom's saying that "God draws men, but he draws only willing men". For Melanchthon, justification takes place when one consciously grasps the salvation offered by Christ, therefore, he departs from the radical reformers' position on the passivity of man.

The human will must not be idle but must resist weakness and sin. We must extol and never underestimate the grace of God but at the same time ensure that this is not a false security and an excuse for sluggishness.

After the death of Luther on 18 February 1546 Melanchthon became the chief theologian of the Evangelical faith. He maintained this undisputed position for only a short time until after the Imperial War against the Evangelicals in the same year. When the strict Lutherans settled at the university of Jena and Melanchthon returned alone to Wittenberg as the birthplace of the reform he was regarded by many as too compliant a leader. He came under attack from men like Osiander and Matthew Vlacich (Flacius) of Illyria who charged him with deviating from the pure doctrine of Luther. His life was dogged by such controversies over adiaphora (things of little consequence over which the reformers could be indifferent as they did not challenge the central precepts of the reform). In many ways Melanchthon opened himself up to such charges because of his moderate and eirenic approach to contentious questions. He claimed to be faithful always to the central doctrines of justification, the Lord's Supper and ecclesiology and was regarded right up to his death as possessing a personal authority within Protestantism which meant that he would be called upon to give an opinion on all the important questions of his day. He was asked by the Leipzig Consistory to compile a Corpus Doctrinae in 1560 before his death and thus he maintained a central position not only as the author of two of the seminal works in the Book of Concord but as the foremost systematic theologian of the Lutheran Church of his day.

Part II

Philip Melanchthon:

Conciliator between Humanism and the Evangelical Religion

The reawakening in learned circles which was brought about by the example of Erasmus of Rotterdam was to have far-reaching effects in the Church. Although he was a priest himself, Erasmus had established a reputation for attacking popes, bishops, priests, monks and friars. His real enemy was the abuses which were perpetrated by these people especially when they took to themselves the name of theologian.

From Erasmus Melanchthon inherited two basic qualities. Firstly, a hatred of obscurantism and secondly, a method of approaching study by isolating the most important points and then building a system around them. Both humanists had been influenced by the writings of Rudolf Agricola from whom they drew inspiration for their new methodology.

The humanist method was to return to the sources. By virtue of their linguistic and philological skills they examined the ancient writers, both Christian and pagan, and from this well drew the guidelines by which to judge the accepted wisdom of their age. By studying the Greek manuscripts of scripture Erasmus had questioned the basic assumptions of the scholastics. He found, for example, that the trinitarian formula quoted by St Thomas ⁽²⁷⁾ (1 Jn. 5:7-8) was not there in the original ⁽²⁸⁾ and so he was led into conflict with the Scholastics. Many of the Scholastics' concerns seemed to him to be an obsession with trivia which led him to say: "A man might sooner find his way out of a labyrinth than the intellectual mazes of

the Realists, Nominalists, Thomists, Albertists, Occamists and Scotists". (29)

Erasmus and Melanchthon parted company over the question of Nominalism. For the Humanist the Nominalists were caught up in unimportant questions. He could not accept the idea that God can do whatever he wills even if he contradicts himself. Such an idea he regarded as absurd. If God possessed such absolute power it would corrupt him absolutely. Melanchthon was a Nominalist in his early academic life. He was convinced that all knowledge was subjective and so the universal truths which the Realists held to exist in the mind of God were a nonsense to him. This paved the way for his later abandoning of reason as a basis for belief. Faith alone, based on the literal revelation of scripture, was the foundation of a schema of beliefs.

For Philip humanism was in his blood. His maternal grand-uncle Reuchlin was an early influence even though he later parted company with him when the latter asked him in 1519 to give up Luther, Wittenberg and the reform and join him in the house of John Eck in Ingolstadt. Even the enticement of inheriting his mentor's library could not persuade Melanchthon to give up his new mission which he saw as divinely inspired.

It was a humanist conflict which led Philip towards Wittenberg in the first place. His was not the hand behind "Letters of Obscure Men" (30) but his association with the spirit of this work made Tübingen a burdensome place to be. When Melanchthon arrived in

Wittenberg it was as a humanist. He intended to teach his students the ancient languages so that they could return to the sources of Christian theology. Only by such a training could a man be prepared for the ministry.

Melanchthon stood in a strange position between Luther and Erasmus. He regarded himself as a pupil and friend of the Humanist but also a friend and collaborator of the Reformer. There was no bond of friendship between Luther and Erasmus. The latter felt that the Evangelical religion would be the death of all true learning (31) and therefore he regarded Luther as the author of humanism's downfall. Although Erasmus had little time for Luther and was under considerable pressure to speak out against him, he felt that, in true humanist fashion, Luther should have a fair hearing and should not be silenced.

Philip was aware of the tension between the two and sought to resolve some of the causes for it in the hope that there would not be an open conflict. Throughout the early part of 1524 Melanchthon had been working on the question of predestination and the personal freedom of man in the hope of finding a conciliatory position. Eventually, in the September of the same year, Erasmus, under great pressure from the Pope and Henry VIII, wrote his treatise "De Libero Arbitrio". In this work he wrote that man had the power by virtue of his own free will to do good and thus turn to God. Luther was bound to reply to this challenge and published "De Servo Arbitrio" in 1525 in which he argued that man was doomed to sin and could not, of his own free will, as much as turn to God for help. Philip shared Luther's view in basic terms and believed that man was totally dependent on God for his justification by faith.

In the debate which followed the publication of these works on free will Melanchthon was not a passive spectator. He was influenced by Erasmus on his concept of man and was willing to acknowledge certain freedom of will in man. He believed that the doctrine of predestination was too obscure and surrounded by mystery for the simple man of the people to understand. However, Erasmus' influence on free will prompted Philip to suggest that man had a certain freedom in the realm of civil righteousness. He based this view on natural law following Rom. 2: 14-15. For Melanchthon, of course, natural law could be traced back to God's action and so he saw this position as a personal reconciliation between humanism and Evangelicalism in his own life and thus between Erasmianism and Lutheranism. Philip developed this line of reasoning in his commentary on Colossians published in 1527 in which he argued that the realms of civil existence and religious existence must not be confused; this was precisely the mistake of Thomas Müntzer and the fanatics. Melanchthon developed this sphere of the use of free will and underscored its necessity in outward righteousness where man could choose to do good and avoid evil. This led some of Luther's pupils to attack Melanchthon for moving away from purity of doctrine and caused Luther to speak in Philip's defence. Luther was prepared to tolerate and support the humanism of his co-worker as he saw it being based on a truly reformed concept of man being dependant on God and so it could be an aid to seeking and expressing the truth.

As time went on Philip's theological opinion on this question developed. By 1535 when he revised his Loci he had moved away from the more radical reformed position of the total passivity of the will. He had been working over the consequences of John Chrysostom's

phrase: "God draws men, but he draws only willing men". Melanchthon's position in the light of this new insight was that justification takes place when one consciously grasps the salvation offered by Christ. By virtue of his free will man can and must resist weakness and sin. While not wanting to underestimate the power of God's grace this must never become a false security. In this way Philip tried to find a middle path on which all men of good will could agree. He was the true humanist, moderate and eirenic, and at the same time firmly within the reformed camp.

As a humanist Melanchthon was interested in education. He abhorred the ignorance of the clergy and sought to remove it. However, this was not enough. Education was the keystone of the Reformation. The common man and woman had to be able to read and understand the scriptures as the final authority if they were to know the demands and fruits of their faith. Philip had started a school in his own house in 1520 but it was not until after the chaos and destruction of the Peasants' War that he began to earn the reputation as the Protestant Preceptor of Germany. As such he was involved in establishing new classical schools in Eisleben, Magdeburg and Nuremberg. He helped to reorganise the universities of Tübingen, Leipzig and Heidelberg as well as the new universities of Marburg and Königsberg. A massive change came about when, as a result of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, the responsibility for education was taken away from the clergy and given to the rulers on behalf of the people. Philip's own reputation as a universal scholar was growing. In 1524 he was elected Rector of the University of Wittenberg even though he was a married man. He had expertise in antiquity and theology as well as

some knowledge of jurisprudence, natural science, mathematics and medicine. Many scholars approached him with the request that he would preface their works.

When Elector John the Steadfast succeeded Frederick the Wise in Saxony the country was still in a state of chaos after the Peasants' War. He wanted to use Melanchthon's skills to bring stability back to the people and the local churches. In 1527 orders were given for a visitation of all the Saxon churches to examine the clergy, enquire into worship, regulate the administration of Church property and establish schools. This idea had first been suggested to the Elector by Nicholas Hausmann, a friend of Luther's, in 1524. Melanchthon drew up the form of examination of the clergy and himself took part in the visitation of Thuringia. In the light of this he was so appalled that he drew up the "Instruction for the Visitors (1528)". (32) This was submitted to Luther and Bugenhagen and approved unaltered. The Instruction had eighteen articles, the first fourteen on doctrine and then one each on worship, discipline, education and the Turks. Pastors were enjoined to preach the whole gospel and not just those texts which appealed to them. Worship was to be held every day, morning and evening. In the morning the reading was to come from the New Testament and from the Old Testament in the evening. There was to be preaching on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday which was to emphasise the Christian life and contain illustrations for the simple. The servants and young people who came to church on Sunday afternoons were to have the Ten Commandments, Creed and Lord's Prayer expounded to them. Philip also provided a course for schoolmasters to instruct the children.

Reflecting upon the incredible ignorance which he found during his visitations Melanchthon had to revise his notion of the place of the will and repentance in the process of justification. He decided that repentance must precede faith, people must be brought to fear and contrition by the law so that they could experience God in their inmost souls and turn to him in response to his gift of faith. One cannot begin with the word of grace until people have begun to show the fruits of repentance.

In 1523 and 1524 Philip had prepared a little handbook for the use of his private pupils. It contained the Decalogue, Lord's Prayer, Creed, an alphabet, "sayings of the seven sages" and numerous prayers in praise of God. His thoughts turned in this direction again after his first tour of visitation and at Spalatin's wish Melanchthon composed a "Brief Exposition of the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer and the Creed" in 1527, before Luther's "Short Catechism". He also compiled a book of biblical material which gave the basis for catechetical instruction called "Several sayings" which was frequently reprinted but did not receive great acclaim as a book of scripture passages, perhaps because he had re-translated several sections from Luther's German bible.

One charge which was levelled against Melanchthon was that he was soft-tongued when it came to dealings with humanist Catholics. Erasmus had influenced many of the advisers of Europe. In the Court of Charles V there were men like Cardinal Ximenez, Juan and Alonso de Valdés and George Witzel who were of the Erasmian school. During the years 1532 to 1536 Melanchthon held a correspondence with many

humanist Catholics. One such was Bishop Crucius of Plock, Poland, who had invited him to visit his diocese. The tone of these letters is most placatory, rather similar to the correspondence with Cardinal Campeggio during the Augsburg Diet. Melanchthon used language and a style which was designed to alleviate controversy, focus on the few essential elements of the reform and work for peace by negotiation at almost any cost. Philip felt the break-up of the unity of the Church most deeply, while Luther and others were delighted with the outcome of the Diet of Augsburg, he felt it to be a terrible blight on the Church that reform could only come about by schism. As a theologian Philip knew that the disputed questions would have to be resolved before any real attempt at reunion.

In 1532 Melanchthon dedicated the revised edition of his commentary on Romans to Cardinal Albert of Mainz in an attempt to prompt him to work for peace. Likewise he wrote to Erasmus and other Catholic humanists. He was devoted to the humanist ideal that there was a middle path upon which all well-intentioned and learned men could meet. It was in this cause of moderation that he begged his humanist friends to join him. Erasmus had acknowledged earlier that Philip had fought for peace at Augsburg and said that he would have joined him had his health permitted. It is quite probable that Melanchthon influenced Erasmus to write the last treatise before his death "On the lovely peace of the Church". As his correspondence with the Humanist shows Philip used his method in judging dogmas and all disputed questions.

The softly spoken approach of Melanchthon to humanists of the old faith did not go unnoticed by his contemporaries. When strong

pressure was applied for him to go to France as an adviser, the Elector refused to give permission because he felt that Melanchthon would prove too compliant away from the constraints of his colleagues in Germany. The Elector had political reasons too. Similarly, Melanchthon had been in correspondence with Henry VIII who wanted him to go to England. Philip urged Henry to support the reform and Luther favoured Melanchthon's trip to England but again the Elector refused and preferred the English to send a delegation to Wittenberg instead, for which meeting Melanchthon wrote the Wittenberg Articles (1536).⁽³³⁾ When the conference actually took place it became clear that Henry wanted to affiliate with the Schmalkaldic League for political rather than religious reasons and he refused to make the required theological confession.

The relationship between humanism and the reformed religion was never an easy one. Much of the groundwork for the reform had been done by the humanists when they challenged the bastion of Scholasticism and replaced it with a move back to the original sources of the scriptures and Fathers. However there were fundamental disagreements over such questions as free will as have been shown. Many of the reformers shed their debt to humanism when they moved to the more radical wings of the Evangelical Church. Many Catholics abandoned the insights of humanism when they saw the Church being shattered by the new religion and clung instead to the pillars of Scholasticism which the Council of Trent set upon unassailable foundations. But there were a few conciliators like Philip Melanchthon who tried to take whatever was good and true from both streams of learning and somehow weld them together into a unity upon which "all men of good will and learning could agree".

Part III

Philip Melanchthon:

Conciliator between Catholics and Protestants

Chapter One: Lead up to the great division at Augsburg

In June 1519 Melanchthon thought that the Leipzig Debate would settle the disputed questions of theology which Martin Luther had raised; how wrong he was! From that year onwards the rest of Philip's life was to be spent in constant theological turmoil between the various groups of the Reformed and Catholic religions.

The Leipzig Debate was between Luther and John Eck, the leading protagonist among the Catholic theologians. Philip went along, at his own instigation, as an observer. The debate was indecisive and the records were sent to the Sorbonne for judgement. Melanchthon wrote his own account of it for his friend Oecolampadius in which he said that he was attracted to Luther's opinions even though he could not say as yet how far he shared them. The letter was leaked and it drew a quick response from John Eck to which Melanchthon replied that the Word of God contained in scripture was the final authority on earth against which all doctrines must be tested. ⁽³⁴⁾ This was Philip's first exchange with Eck; it set the pattern for all that was to follow. In the next year, 1520, Eck reported Melanchthon to Frederick the Wise with the request that the Elector should set up an investigation into his theology. This drew an open letter from Melanchthon to John Hess of Breslau in which he set forth and defended his rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

It was now clear to all on the Catholic side that Melanchthon was going to throw in his weight with Luther. He became a sufficiently dangerous force by 1524 to be approached by Cardinal Campeggio's secretary Frederick Nausea. This happened while Philip was visiting his mother in Bretten. The Papal Legate had been charged with calming the German waters and his idea was to win Philip back to the Roman Church but the latter's reply was clear; he would continue to set forth pure doctrine and wished that all who had the Church's welfare at heart would unite to amend the intolerable conditions in the Church. For the Legate Melanchthon jotted down the following note on Luther's doctrine: "The world errs if it says that Luther wants to abolish Church practices. Luther does not fight over outward things. His concern is the righteousness of God. Scripture alone, to which he appeals, can confirm the conscience against the gates of hell. Human conditions contribute nothing towards the righteousness of God. In the mass there are so many abuses that they cannot be overlooked. If no changes are made in it, then men who are far from being Luther's pupils, will arouse people against the Church". (35)

It was after his holiday in Bretten that Melanchthon met up with Philip of Hesse. The Landgrave approached Melanchthon in 1526 with a request that he should guide the introduction of the reform in Hesse. Philip's answer shows not only his ability to distinguish essentials from trivia but also that he had learnt how to treat ordinary people with wisdom and compassion. The Landgrave should abolish all private masses and allow only public mass which he should require to be celebrated according to the old rite on every feast day. To avoid violence he was to change the ceremonies only gradually and to allow people to retain rituals which they were reluctant to give up

as they do not make one either good or bad and are inconsequential in comparison with the essentials of fear of God, faith, love and obedience.

Once the Peasants' War had died down in 1526 Melanchthon began to reshape the Church in Saxony which his visitations had shown to be sadly awry. In that year he wrote a treatise "On the Mass and Celibacy" in which he aimed to set out in a clear and simple way the doctrine of the mass so that even the poorest educated among the clergy could understand. He isolated three opinions about the mass. The first, as held by Thomas Aquinas, was that the mass is a meritorious sacrifice offered to God in order to obtain grace for the living and the dead; this opinion was refuted by the doctrine of justification by faith. The second, as held by the advocates of private masses, was that the mass is a thanksgiving sacrifice which must be offered daily and in which the body and blood of Christ is offered to the Father once more; this opinion Philip refuted by saying that faith alone and confession are the only true Christian acts of thanksgiving. The third, which alone Melanchthon judged to be consistent with scripture, was that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament by which grace is offered to us and by which we are led to believe and have our troubled consciences comforted. Philip states that remission of sins is offered in the Supper and that the phrase "Do this in remembrance of me" is an exhortation to believe that here Christ gives us his grace.

This marks the end of the first chapter in Philip's theological life. He is about to launch into his rôle as a major proponent of Evangelical doctrines at formal diets with the Catholics. Before this we can see that he has isolated reform of the mass and clergy and the

doctrine of justification by faith as the cornerstones of his own theological position. From this basis he was ready to begin the chapter of debates.

The first real watershed of the reformers collectively was the First Diet of Speyer (Spires) which took place in June 1526. In March of that year the Emperor Charles V had sent out an instruction from Spain to the effect that all religious innovations were banned and everyone in Germany was to return to the Edict of Worms (1521). This caused the Elector John of Saxony to raise with his theologians the question of the legality of his introduction of reformed doctrines. To this Melanchthon and Luther replied that a prince had the right to determine before God the religion in his territories. This was the opinion which the Elector took to the diet when it met in June 1526. The Emperor could not be present at the diet because he was embroiled in war against the Papacy and on these grounds the diet decided to set aside his instruction of March 1526. They decided that each prince should order ecclesiastical affairs in his own territories in accordance with his own conscience. This followed logically from the current opinion that civil authority was God given and that a prince was entitled to enforce the dictates of his conscience on his subjects.

This state of mutual tolerance, however begrudged, continued until the Emperor was able to journey to Speyer for the Second Imperial Diet in 1529. Two intervening events changed the scene for this second diet: the von Pack affair and the peace between the Emperor and the Pope.

In February 1528 Dr Otto von Pack, ex-chancellor of Duke George, sold to Philip of Hesse for one thousand florins a copy of an alleged document in which several Catholic princes and bishops bound themselves to restore Papalism to Germany. It gave details of a plan to assault the Elector of Saxony and force him to hand over Luther. If he refused then they would dethrone him and the Landgrave and partition their lands. The Landgrave Philip of Hesse was completely taken in by this document and convinced the Elector John of the imminent threat. The two princes rallied their forces which amounted to 26,000 men at arms. By 9 March 1528 their forces were ready for battle but John of Saxony hesitated and wished to consult his theologians on the ethics of taking up arms on behalf of the gospel. On 15 May 1528 Luther and Melanchthon met the Elector at Torgau and declared themselves to be opposed to furthering the reform by the use of force, although they allowed that self-defence might be acceptable. In the meantime, however, Philip of Hesse, being the more bellicose of the two, had attacked the Bishoprics of Würzburg and Bamberg and compelled them to pay indemnities of forty thousand and twenty thousand florins. He had also enlisted French and Hungarian aid. This led to retaliation by Catholics against Evangelicals in Papal territories. In Austria Evangelicals were punished not just as heretics but as criminals, vendors of Protestant books were treated as poisoners and threatened with death by drowning. Retaliation was taken in Bavaria, Landsberg, Munich and Cologne. Eventually the Landgrave sent a copy of the Pack document to Duke George who pronounced it to be a forgery, as did the other "signatories". In the end von Pack admitted to being the author of the document.

In the same year the Emperor and the Pope reconciled their differences and appeared to be on friendly terms again to the extent of lodging in the same palace. One of the outcomes of the reconciliation was a promise from the Emperor that he would restore the Catholic religion to Germany and bring it back to conformity with the Papacy. In execution of this promise the Emperor issued a mandate on 30 November 1528 for a diet at Speyer to convene on 2 February 1529.

The Second Diet of Speyer eventually opened on 15 March 1529. Luther was still under Imperial ban and so could not travel so the Elector John of Saxony chose the thirty-two year old Melanchthon and Agricola to be his advisers at the diet. Before the diet convened Philip made an attempt to ensure that the disputed areas would be fully discussed and that no force would be used to try to reunite the Church by dedicating the foreword to his new commentary on Daniel to the Archduke Ferdinand, the brother of the Emperor.

As soon as the diet was convened the 1526 recess decree was nullified and all religious innovations were forbidden. The Emperor made a throne speech in which he referred to the "evil, grave, perilous and pernicious doctrines and errors" that had arisen and caused "pitiful revolts, tumults, war, misery and bloodshed". He was now going to urge the Pope to call a general council and he would forbid anyone to oppose "the ancient usages and customs, or go over to any wrong or strange creed, or attach himself to any new sect".⁽³⁶⁾ The whole proceedings of the diet were organised and orchestrated by a powerful Catholic majority and they eventually overcame all opposition to the throne speech by the Evangelicals. A resolution was forced through the diet on 6 and 7 April 1529 which reinstated the prohibition of

reform enacted by the Diet of Worms (1521), forbade any further innovations, forbade those who denied transubstantiation to preach in public, and decreed that no-one anywhere should be forbidden to hear or celebrate the mass. (37) All these things were to remain unreformed until the proposed general council.

This left the Evangelical princes in a quandary because they had already instituted reforms, had allowed priests to marry and knew, in their consciences, that they had acted with integrity before God. Six Evangelical princes and the representatives of fourteen free cities joined together to present a protest on 19 April 1529. (38) In this they declared that "In matters effecting the glory of God and the salvation of our souls, everyone must stand on his own before God and give account". They protested that they would "persevere with the grace and help of God in insisting that only God's Word and the holy gospel shall be preached, and nothing contrary to it". This protestation was the first concerted act by the Evangelical Estates and led to the generic name "Protestant". They tried to present this document to Archduke Ferdinand in the place of the absent Emperor but he refused to accept it and instead adjourned the diet on 24 April 1529. The Protestants then sent their message to the Emperor direct but he imprisoned the messengers.

Melanchthon had expected something bad to happen at the diet ever since January 1529 when a great light appeared in the northern sky which he thought boded ill. Further he had observed unusual conjugations of stars which he could not explain. He had no hand in the composition of the protest and believed in his naïvety in

the good will of the Emperor whom he believed to be God's appointed ruler; he questioned whether more should not be conceded to him. There had been a statement about the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist included in the April 7th resolution which Melanchthon saw as being aimed at the Zwinglians in an attempt to divide up the Evangelicals and thus weaken their position. While Philip didn't agree with Zwingli's eucharistic doctrine he demanded that Zwingli should not be condemned without a hearing and insisted that he should be allowed to present his case.

In the light of their protest and the concerted opposition to the Evangelicals a secret agreement was signed on 22 April 1529 ⁽³⁹⁾ by the Elector of Saxony, the Landgrave Philip and the Upper German free cities of Strasbourg, Nuremberg and Ulm in which they agreed mutually to defend and support one another should any be attacked. Philip of Hesse wanted to include the Swiss in this mutual defence plan but Luther and Melanchthon objected on the grounds that agreement on doctrine should precede military alliance. However, when Melanchthon returned to Wittenberg on 6 May 1529 he found that such a pact had been entered into with the Zwinglians.

The stage was now set for the greatest of all diets in the history of the Reformation. During the closing months of 1529 it looked as though there would be violent conflict between the Evangelical Estates and the Emperor. The Elector of Saxony took counsel with Luther, Melanchthon and his other advisers on the morality of such opposition. Philip was against violent resistance and counselled that the Christian should obey lawful authority even if it were

tyrannical. Many others, especially the Upper German cities, did not agree.

The discussions were interrupted by a summons from the Emperor issued on 21 January 1530 to assemble at Augsburg on 8 April 1530, ⁽⁴⁰⁾ there to discuss the threat of the Turks and to settle disputed questions of religion. The Elector John responded to this by asking his theologians to draw up the grounds on which they would base their claims. Melanchthon suggested that they should draw up two lists, one of things on which no discussion was possible and the other of points which were open to debate. The first included the Lord's Supper, marriage of the clergy, rejection of private masses, monasteries and oaths due to the bishop. The exact content of the final Torgau articles is disputed by historians but they concentrated on ceremonial and disciplinary matters rather than doctrine. At this stage it was hoped that an amicable settlement could be found where certain reforms would be permitted while maintaining the integrity of the Church. It would appear that Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas (and Bugenhagen ?), wrote a document called: "Judgement of the learned at Wittenberg on ceremonies and what is therewith connected, to be presented to the Emperor" ⁽⁴¹⁾ which was the basis of the final articles. ⁽⁴²⁾ It was these Articles which were carried to Augsburg by Melanchthon and used as one source for his Confession.

Luther was still a wanted man at the time of the Diet of Augsburg so he could not attend it; the leading Evangelical theologian at the diet was Melanchthon who wrote all the major depositions and took part in many attempts to find a conciliatory solution. The Elector of

Saxony set out for the diet with Melanchthon; Luther travelled with them as far as the castle at Coburg which was the last safe house in Saxony where he could be sure of the Elector's protection. From Coburg, Luther had to observe the happenings from a distance, correspond with Melanchthon, the princes and other theologians (43) and contain his impatience until the delegation returned. Although there was some tension between Luther and Melanchthon due to the former's feeling of being kept in the dark, he saw and approved Melanchthon's statements at every major juncture.

Upon arriving in Augsburg, Melanchthon was presented for the first time with the book written by John Eck in which he aimed to disprove all the reformed positions: "404 Articles against Luther". (44) It was reading this book which prompted Philip to begin his exposition of the similarities between the Evangelical faith and the Early Church.

Eck had confused and mixed together many extracts from a number of reformers, both Lutherans and Radicals. There were quotations from Luther, Melanchthon, Carlstadt, Zwingli and others, which had been taken out of context and labelled either "heretical" or "schismatic". The work represented a concerted effort by Eck to display his erudition and make an absolute claim to be the leading exponent of Catholic theology in Germany. The work can be divided as follows:

- Arts. 1 - 41: doctrines of Luther previously condemned by the Bull "Exsurge Domine".
- Arts. 42 - 54: articles drawn up by Eck for debate at Leipzig (1519)
- Arts. 55 - 61: articles written by Eck for public debate at Baden (1526)
- Arts. 62 - 65: articles published by Eck for dispute at Berne (1528)

Arts. 66 - 169: a variety of statements pertaining to dogma drawn from the writings of various reformers.

Arts. 170 - 332: a collection of statements touching on ecclesiastical matters.

Arts. 333 - 404: citations alluding to political affairs.

Faced with this work Melanchthon had to rethink his whole position. He had come to the diet bearing the Torgau Articles and the brief to defend the Elector's innovations in religion. He was now faced with presenting a full scale defence of the integrity of the Evangelical doctrines and distinguishing his position both from the Catholics and the Radicals. This required a totally different statement which had to be prepared on the spot.

Melanchthon set about writing the statement which was to become the Augsburg Confession. Historians ⁽⁴⁵⁾ have traced his sources for this work, they were:

- a. A private confession against Zwingli: "On the Holy Communion," published by Luther in the Spring of 1528.
- b. The Schwabach Articles (1529) prepared for the Colloquy of Marburg.
- c. The Marburg Articles (1529)
- d. "Instructions of the Visitors for the pastors of Saxony" (1528)
- e. The Torgau Articles (March 1530)
- f. The Nicene, Athanasian and Inno~~cent~~entianum Creeds (the latter formulated by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) against the Cathari and ascribed to Innocent III).

The major doctrinal sources were obviously the Schwabach and Marburg Articles but the extent by which they were expanded by Philip can be seen by the fact that of the 1,682 German words in the first seventeen articles of the Augsburg Confession, only 438 originated in the Schwabach and Marburg Articles. Melanchthon always regarded the Confession as his own intellectual property and over the years he re-worked it many times, however, it was subscribed to by all the Evangelical princes before presentation at the diet and should be seen as a confession of the Reformed Church.

Melanchthon spent several weeks working on the text with his advisers and representatives of the several princes and free cities present. (46) He sent the almost finished text to Luther at Coburg on 11 May 1530 with the request that he would comment and revise it as necessary. Luther gave his complete agreement to the contents and did not suggest any improvements, although he regarded it as a "Softly and gentle stepping approach". In the weeks which followed the approval by Luther, Melanchthon polished the final text. He had to tone down his attack on the Sacramentarians because Philip of Hesse desired that the Confession should be broad enough to be signed, not just by the Saxons, but also by the representatives of the South German cities. Melanchthon also used Roman terminology in Article 10 (on the Supper) and toned down Article 28 (on the power of bishops) so as not to anger the Emperor. The drafting of the preface was taken out of Melanchthon's hands and it was drawn up by Chancellor Gregory Brück.

Melanchthon was also involved with some conciliatory meetings with one of the Imperial secretaries, Alfonso de Valdés (an Erasmian

humanist), in the days immediately prior to the opening of the diet (around 18 June 1530). Valdés proved ready to listen to Melanchthon's assertion that the Evangelicals were not heretics but sought only to refute certain errors and abuses. Valdés gained the consent of the Emperor to follow this line of approach and asked Melanchthon to specify exactly where the differences lay. Philip described these as marriage of the clergy, both kinds in the communion, the reform of the mass and church property. He expressed himself to be confident that if these could be settled a compromise could be reached on all else. Melanchthon came in for considerable criticism for "fraternisation with the enemy" and had to withdraw. In truth, Melanchthon was extremely naïve in the field of political intrigue and was willing to grant integrity to opponents where a more seasoned diplomat would sense cynicism and a veiled trap.

An aura of impending confrontation was created by the Emperor's insistence that all the delegates joined him in the Corpus Christi procession before they opened the diet and an order that preaching should be banned during this time. The Evangelical princes took the counsel of their theologians and decided that they were bound in conscience not to walk in procession as they considered the adoration of the consecrated bread to be idolatry and therefore sinful. The procession took place with the Emperor being joined by the Catholic delegates but with the marked absence of the Evangelicals and almost all the townspeople. The Emperor was furious. The next day, 17 June 1530, the Emperor required a written reply to his ban on preaching. This was duly drawn up and signed by the Evangelical princes ⁽⁴⁷⁾ in which they declared that man does not live on bread alone; they could as

easily deny themselves their daily bread as they could their daily sermon on the Word of God so, claiming the precedent of antiquity, they respectfully advised the Emperor that they would continue to hear sermons preached with the only proviso being that they would censure error.

The diet eventually opened on 20 June 1530 and the first few days were given over to discussions on the Turks. The Emperor made several attempts to thwart the reading of the Confession. Firstly he asked for it to be handed over unread, when this failed he asked that it should be read in Latin (so that the common people should not understand) and when he was finally prevailed upon to allow it to be read in German as he had originally promised he scheduled the reading to be held in the Chapter Room of the Bishop's Palace so that its size would limit the number who could be present. The Confession was finally read on 25 June 1530 by the Saxon Vice-Chancellor, Dr Christian Beyer. He read it in such a loud voice that the crowd gathered outside the Chapter Room, estimated at 3,000, could hear every word. It took two hours to complete the reading, during which time the Emperor was reported to have either slept or acted as though bored. When the reading was finished the Emperor asked for the text to be handed to his secretaries to be translated into Italian and that, unfortunately, is the last recorded appearance of the actual text, although its draft forms are extant. (48)

The contents of the Augsburg Confession were:

- Arts. 1 - 6: the saving work of God
- Arts. 7 - 17: the Church, the means of grace, the return of Christ
- Arts. 18 - 21: free will, the cause of sin, good works, the invocation

of saints.

Arts. 22 - 28: Abuses: doctrine must be consonant with the ancient church and where agreement cannot be reached, God must be obeyed rather than man.

The reading of the Confession had a profound impact on both friend and foe. Spalatin wrote: "On this day action was taken on one of the greatest works which ever took place on earth". (49) Some of the representatives of minor cities immediately came to join the Evangelicals on the basis of the Confession.

Now that the crisis had been reached Philip was despondent and had to be encouraged by Luther's letters in which he told him not to have too great an opinion of how much relied on him; it was God's work on which he was engaged. Melanchthon was still working on a false impression of the Emperor whom he saw as a clement peacemaker. Philip considered Charles V to be one of the ideal figures depicted in classical writings and was not up to the labyrinth of political intrigue. As soon as he saw that the Evangelical Estates were ensnared he began to look for concessions. Philip wished to leave no stone unturned in his search for a peaceful settlement and he begged the Elector John to press only for both kinds at the Supper and clerical marriage on the grounds that all else could be compromised. The Elector gave him leave to attempt a solution on these grounds but his attempts were to prove futile. Melanchthon was seen by many as a weak man who was prepared to be compliant and hold out only for a minimum whereas he truly believed that with these essentials settled all else would follow.

Cardinal Campeggio was the Papal Legate at the diet and had reported to Rome ⁽⁵⁰⁾ that he was willing to discuss the return of the cup to the laity, as had been allowed to the Bohemian followers of John Huss, and the marriage of the clergy, as was customary in the Greek Church. Campeggio himself had been married, with five children, and had only been ordained at the age of 38 after his wife's death. Melanchthon heard a rumour that Campeggio was open to discussion on these two points and so wrote to him on 6 July 1530: "We have no dogma which is diverse from that of ~~the~~ Roman Church; we have also rebuked many who have dared to spread dangerous dogmas for which public testimony is available. We are ready to obey the Roman Church if they, with the same charitableness which they have always shown to all people, either ignore or drop certain few things which we, even if we would, could not change...We venerate the authority of the Roman Pope and the whole church government, if only the Roman Pontifex does not cast us aside. But harmony is so easily re-established, if your clemency yield in a few things and we obey in good faith, then why should it be necessary to reject those who plead or to persecute them with fire and sword? For no other reason do we endure so much hatred in Germany than that we defend the dogmas of the Roman Church with so much firmness. We shall in future, until our end, also remain true to Christ and the Roman Church even if you should refuse to mercifully receive us". ⁽⁵¹⁾ Again on 7 July 1530 Melanchthon wrote to the Cardinal stating the "few things" which would restore harmony, namely, communion under both kinds and the marriage of priests. ⁽⁵²⁾ On the following day Melanchthon actually met with Campeggio but to no avail, he was trying to make bricks without the straw of the backing of his princes.

Under the influence of Cardinal Campeggio a committee of Catholic theologians examined the Confession and prepared a confutation of it. The first work they submitted for the Emperor's approval was 351 pages long but he rejected it with the instruction that they should discuss only the points raised in the Confession and refute them by scripture alone. Finally they returned with a 31 page document, the Confutatio Pontificia, ⁽⁵³⁾ which was read to the assembly on 3 August 1530. Several minor Evangelical claims were accepted to be true but no major concessions were made. The Emperor refused to allow the Evangelicals to have a copy of the Confutation but Camerarius had made extensive notes while it was being read, from which they were able to study it. The Landgrave Philip of Hesse was able to see by the tenor of this document that any attempt at a conciliation on religion had been overwhelmed by Imperial politics and so left Augsburg unexpectedly on 6 August 1530.

Melanchthon was involved in two arenas of discussion in an attempt to find a conciliatory position: in discussions with Eck and in writing to Campeggio.

In the discussions which followed the reading of the Confutation Philip made it clear on the floor of the Chamber that he sought union with Rome, which, he said, could be achieved if only they would allow the reform of certain abuses in doctrine and practice. Personally he was prepared to go even to the lengths of revising the Confession if this would ensure union but in this he was balked by the princes who would not permit it. Philip was prepared to renounce the "sola fide" clause if only they would agree that he taught rightly on the righteousness of faith. He was even prepared to accept that "we

become righteous through grace and faith" but all hopes of union were shattered when the discussions failed to reach a concord on clerical marriage, the cup for the laity and private masses. The shallowness of the Roman disputants became evident when the Emperor intervened to demand that the mass be retained. This threw Melanchthon into consternation and he had a foreboding of the ruin of Germany.

Philip had lost much support during these days of disputation and Luther's letters to him carried harsh warnings to stand firm and not overestimate his own importance in what was God's cause. The free cities too were angered by his constant concessions as can be seen by the correspondence of Jerome Baumgartner of Nuremberg. (54) Melanchthon knew that he had lost the support of the Landgrave and many of his party but he justified himself in a letter to Matthew Alber in Reutlingen: "I know that our moderation is reproached by the people. It is not fitting however to heed the cry of the masses: we must look to peace and the future. If concord can be restored in Germany it will be a great blessing for all". (55)

Melanchthon also took another line in his desire to find doves of peace in the Roman camp. He wrote to Campeggio again, but this time through the offices of his secretary. "The advent of no-one in this city gave me greater pleasure than yours. For I know that you are endowed with a certain remarkable sweetness of temper and with an amiability worthy of a learned and wise man. Hence I have freely spoken with you, both of my own private affairs and of the public business; and on account of your virtues I have been led to believe that you would be a promoter of peace in your deliberations.

For this reason I have often shown that if a few things were kept in the background, these divisions could be healed. In my opinion it would contribute very much to the quiet of the church and the dignity of the Roman See, to make peace on the conditions which I have mentioned. For also our priests should in turn render obedience to the bishops. Thus the church would unite again in one body, and the Roman See would have its own honour, so that, if anything wrong remains in the churches, it can gradually be corrected by the care of the bishops. It is also our earnest desire to be free from these contentions, that we may give our whole attention to the diligent improvement of doctrine. And unless this be done, wise men can easily foresee what, amid so many sects, will come upon posterity. And in this matter it is easy to see how indifferent those are whom you now oppose to us. Yesterday the Confutation of our Confession was read. If it shall be published, condemning us, believe me it will not have great admiration among judicious men, and will irritate the mind of ours. Thus there is danger that by the renewal of this whole tragedy, greater commotion than ever will ensue. Hence I desire that these evils of the church be not increased in virulence. Therefore I beg you to indicate to me in a few words, whether you have spoken to your Reverend Master about these conditions, and what hope he will hold out. If I can obtain anything favourable I shall take care that the Roman See will not repent its kindness. The feelings and desires of many good men are united in this matter, who will do all they can to enlarge the authority of the bishops and to establish the peace of the church.

You see we cannot dissolve existing marriages, nor have other priests. Nor could the change in regard to both elements cease without

contempt for the sacrament. It does not belong to the Papal clemency to make war for such reasons, since there is nothing which is injurious to good men or to piety. And if more new doctrines appear, it belongs to your prudence to take care that a much greater commotion does not occur in the church. I have written these things to you, a good and wise man, and I ask you to exhort yours to justice, and to indicate to me by this my friend, what hope your Reverend Master holds out.

As I am suffering with the gout I cannot come to you". (56)

Campeggio's reply to Philip was delivered across the floor of the chamber the next day when he demanded Melanchthon's complete surrender to Roman doctrine. Philip resolutely refused to surrender and demanded the use of his conscience.

In the light of his experience in attempting a reconciliation Melanchthon realised that the Catholics had no intention of moving an inch towards a mutual agreement, as the differences emerged with greater clarity, in fact, it was clear that on a whole series of basic points no agreement was possible. In these circumstances Philip felt that his only course was to expound and defend the articles of Evangelical faith which had been attacked in the Confutation so, with the help of Camerarius' notes, Melanchthon began to compose the Apology for the Augsburg Confession in which he intended to demonstrate the truth of their claims from scripture on behalf of the Evangelical Estates.

On 22 September 1530 the Emperor issued the Recess of the diet. (57)
In it he stated that the errors of the Evangelicals had been duly listened to, everyone who wanted to speak had been heard and their arguments had been completely refuted by the Catholic theologians

drawing from the scriptures and other writings. Therefore, the Evangelicals were forbidden to publish any books or prohibit the old religion from being practiced until 15 April 1531 by which date the Elector, five Princes and leaders of the six free cities would return to the true practice of religion or accept the consequences of the Imperial displeasure. The Evangelical Estates were to disperse and inform the Emperor of their decision by the given date and he would inform them of his course of action. This Recess meant that all hopes of a peaceful solution were lost and the Evangelicals would either have to submit to Roman doctrine or be attacked by the Imperial armies. The only glimmer of hope was that the Emperor had agreed that he would press the Pope to call a general council but, even at its earliest, this could not meet until a year after the deadline for their submission.

The only reply which the Evangelicals could make to the Recess was to submit the first draft of Melanchthon's Apology ⁽⁵⁸⁾ to the Emperor on the same day and then leave Augsburg immediately for their own homes.

The Diet of Augsburg is the true launch pad of the Reformed Church. For Philip Melanchthon it was his finest hour as author of the Confession and the leader of the Evangelical party. While he had remained firm in his faith, he had tried every conceivable way to prevent the schism which seemed inevitable even at the cost of his supporter's respect and esteem. The Catholics had demonstrated their ultimate intransigence, self-confidence in the possession of the truth and a disregard for the wedge which was being driven through the heart of the Christian Church. The Emperor emerged as a political

leader whose concern for peace and prosperity in his alliance with the Pope, predisposed him to refute and crush the Protestant cause. The leaders of the Evangelical Estates left the diet as condemned men who had to the last been true to their consciences and remained at peace with God.

During the journey back to Wittenberg after the diet, Melanchthon was able to review his first draft of the Apology and at home to re-work it at length. He prepared both the Confession and the Apology for the printer but there was a long delay in their appearance which was not before April or May 1531. ⁽⁵⁹⁾ The original publication was in Latin, with Justus Jonas preparing the German version of the Apology. Although Melanchthon regarded this as a personal work it found favour with his readers and took a place alongside the Confession as a confessional document in the Evangelical Church.

Once they had a chance to reflect on the Diet of Augsburg, the Evangelical Estates saw clearly the true state of affairs. The Emperor would allow no reform of religion in his lands and was prepared to use force to call the Evangelicals to obedience. On 27 February 1531 representatives of all the Protestant groups in Germany met in the Town Hall in Schmalkalden to form a self-defence pact in view of the Emperor's threat at the recess of Augsburg. Here a strong alliance was formed called the Schmalkaldic (Schmalcald) League between Lutherans and Zwinglians as well as north and south German princes and cities. This military force became a strong opposition to the threat of a Hapsburg attack and drew the attention of Thomas Cromwell and Henry VIII who toyed with the idea of associating the English with the League. So, before the Imperial deadline, the Protestant forces had resolved

and declared their intention of holding firm to their consciences and to the reform of religion in the Estates. Melanchthon was ever wary that these political alliances would cloud the agreement on religion on which he thought all political groupings should be based, so he worked for unity among the reformers as well as with the old religion.

Chapter II: Pathway to Separate Development

In many ways the die was cast at the Diet of Augsburg. The Emperor had done his utmost to deliver Germany back to conformity with the Pope and the Evangelical Princes and their theologians had stood firm according to their consciences. War did not ensue but there was a state of armed truce. The Evangelical Estates were a thorn in the Emperor's flesh but they were too strong to be crushed. Melanchthon continued his work at Wittenberg and sought every opportunity to conciliate between the Catholics and Protestants while having to spend an ever increasing amount of his time in dialogue with Radical Reformers.

Many attempts were made to re-open dialogue across the major divide. Not all of these were honourable. In 1537 Cardinal Sadolet, a mild and learned Catholic who had been charged with preparing for a general council and had assigned to himself the task of reforming the Catholic Church and reconciling the Protestants, wrote two letters to Melanchthon. The first praised his moderation but the second was filled with complaints about Luther's needless violence. Both letters were printed and circulated in Wittenberg. Luther began to suspect Philip and many others openly called him a deserter and a papish traitor. The whole thing blew over when Luther found out that Melanchthon had never answered the letters from the Cardinal and they were part of a papish plot to disrupt the Evangelicals. This was a time of some tension between the Reformer and Melanchthon. Many suspected Melanchthon of watering-down his position not only with Catholics but also with the Radicals. Much pain had to be endured but Philip held fast to his mission to find a suitable middle way.

He pursued many Catholic humanists and tried to strike up a dialogue with them. This produced nothing on the main front and led only to bitterness and suspicion among his friends. When the political demands for a general council had brought some action from the Pope in 1533 he had sent out a letter of solicitation. Melanchthon was asked for an opinion on this and answered that the Evangelicals should not refuse to participate in a council as it was the only way to negotiate the disputed questions. His one condition was that the council should be "free", by which he meant that the Evangelicals should be partners in the debates and should not appear to be summoned to defend their departure from tradition. He sought a council which would debate the disputed questions and decide them by the Word of God alone. The logic and scholarship of the Evangelical position made Melanchthon think that a council would be bound to see the force of their arguments and thus act to rid the world of controversies.

The Elector of Saxony also sought the opinion of his jurists as well as the theologians. The former opposed the council on the grounds that they saw no papal guarantee of objective treatment of the disputed questions. The Elector preferred this advice and Saxony refused to take part.

When the question of a council was raised again in 1535 the Papal Nuncio, Vergerio, declared that it would be "free". However, a conference of Evangelical Princes in Schmalkalden decided that the required guarantees had still to be met and Melanchthon was charged with drafting a reply in which he was to lay out afresh what the Evangelicals meant by "free".

In February 1537 the Nuncio delivered the Bull summoning the council to meet at Mantua on 23 May 1537, to the Elector of Saxony. Melanchthon was still of the opinion that the Evangelicals should take part as, in his political naivety, he trusted in the fairness of the opposition. He managed to persuade the Estates to summon all their theologians to draw up an agreed doctrine which could be presented at a general council. Some of the princes thought this to be unnecessary as they were prepared to rest on the Augsburg Confession but eventually the Elector John Frederick agreed to a meeting and summoned the Diet of Schmalkalden for 23 February 1537. He ordered Luther to draw up articles for the diet "on which he was prepared to stand and remain". This Luther did in three sections:

- a. a statement of the doctrines of the creeds which was very brief and considered to be beyond controversy.
- b. "The office and work of Christ, of our redemption", attacking the mass, the papacy, purgatory, the invocation of saints and monasticism.
- c. matters on which Protestants themselves were divided, e.g. the eucharist. (60)

Before these Schmalkalden Articles were presented they were subscribed to by the Wittenberg theologians: Amsdorf, Spalatin and Agricola. Melanchthon also added his name to them after he had added an appendix which conceded to the Pope, as a matter of human right, jurisdiction over all other bishops. This remarkably conciliatory attitude towards the papacy caused great anger by both princes and theologians towards Melanchthon so it is worthy of special note: "I regard the above proposals as right and Christian. However, concerning the pope, I would hold that if he would allow the gospel, we, too, might

concede to him the superiority over the bishops, which he possesses by human right, making this concession for the sake of peace and general unity among the Christians who are and may hereafter be under him". (61)

There is confusion as to what actually happened at the Diet of Schmalkalden as it would appear that the true facts were not accurately reported to Luther when he was drawing up his preface to the Schmalkalden Articles. (62) Melanchthon apparently prevailed on Philip of Hesse not to submit Luther's articles openly but to charge the theologians to revise the Augsburg Confessions and Apology, changing nothing in it except to emphasise the papacy. Luther was too ill to attend in person but Bugenhagen circulated his articles for private subscription. Melanchthon formulated his appended article "On the power and primacy of the Pope". In truth this was rather an academic exercise as it had already been decided not to attend the general council and so no-one bothered to consider Melanchthon's appendix seriously. This caused Philip concern as he saw this refusal to attend as accepting perpetual schism without striving to avoid it.

The differences between Melanchthon and Luther arose again at this stage. They published two works almost simultaneously. In Luther's "On the council and the Church", he argued that it was useless to appeal to the councils and Fathers to reform the Church as they did not agree with one another. In Melanchthon's work: "The Church and the authority of the word (1539)", (63) he dealt at great length with ecclesiastical writers of antiquity. "These also are well deserving, especially to the extent to which they are witnesses of

the ancient and primitive church of the apostles. For they confirm our position by their testimony on the following points: the trinity, the natures of Christ, infant baptism, the use of the Lord's Supper, the ordination of ministers, the use of adiaphora and the repentance of the fallen. On all these articles, noteworthy examples from the apostles which support our position are quoted. On the other hand, some writers in some matters and others in different ones have been rather diligent and, as is only human, they often pour forth rashly both foolish and false opinions, which, had they been admonished, they undoubtedly would have had to correct. Often, although they did not think badly, nevertheless they could not express in a sufficiently clear manner just what they wanted to say. Often because of the custom of the times they defended their timely tradition rather harshly. At times they even held some false opinions. Wherefore, not all the writings of the fathers are to be approved without discrimination: and often they fight among themselves. Nor is it a rare thing that someone even differs with himself. Consequently, the final decision ought to rest with apostolic scripture". (64) Philip follows through this general principle in the writings of Origen, Dionysius, Tertullian, Cyprian, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory. This important work by Melanchthon should be seen in the light of his growing median position between scripture and tradition, whereby he sees scripture as the fount and final judge of all doctrine but tradition bearing important witness to the apostolic teaching through the ages and being involved in the shaping of that teaching to the prevailing needs of the time. It marks a milestone in Philip's movement from scripture as the sole authority to a scriptural humanist's position.

Over the next few years there were to be a whole series of colloquies by which the Emperor hoped to keep the Estates tied up until his war with the French and Turks would permit him to crush them. He did not realise the concerted nature of the Evangelical opposition.

Melanchthon regretted that so much of his time had to be taken up in religious controversy instead of his 'real' work of teaching and researching theology. He also objected to the increasingly political note which all negotiations took which meant that the theologically unlearned princes held much more sway in matters of ecclesiastical policy than did the more moderate theologians. Unfortunately for Philip, once the Emperor had decided on a policy of moderation, he was destined to spend his time in continuous travel between colloquies and Imperial Diets.

Melanchthon played a major part in all these discussions. In 1538 he was called to Berlin to submit a memorandum on the moderate reform of the Church in Brandenburg. The Elector of Brandenburg, Joachim II, wanted a settlement on broadly humanist lines but in particular he wanted a Church which was Reformed in doctrine but Catholic in usage. This view, known as the "royal middle way", was Joachim's solution for all unity talks in the Church.

As part of the Emperor's plan for many colloquies there were two in 1540. The first, in June and July, at Hagenau was not attended by Philip as his health would not permit him to travel after the debacle of Philip of Hesse's bigamy. These discussions bore no fruit and were abandoned to be re-convened at Worms on 25 November 1540. Philip was

able to attend this debate and on the way he worked on a memorial in which he set forth what he hoped the Church would gain from public discussions on doctrine. He based all his arguments exclusively on scripture and refused to accept the authority of the pope or any council called by him.

The delegations to the disputation were made up each of eleven theologians led respectively by Melanchthon and Gropper, the Canonist of Cologne. There were many days spent wrangling over procedure so the disputes proper did not begin until January 1541 by which time it was agreed that one theologian from each side should enter into open debate. The combatants were to be Melanchthon and John Eck.

Melanchthon presented a document to the Emperor in which he protested that the Evangelicals would not separate themselves from the true Church of Christ. "We contend not for power, prestige or worldly possessions but we cannot idly tolerate error and abuses". (65) He went on to say that he was opposed to ambiguous statements and preferred straight talk. True to his humanistic nature he contended that an agreement on justification and the mass could be reached if only truth were honoured.

Melanchthon and Eck launched into discussion on 14 January 1541. The debate quickly centred on original sin (66) with Eck claiming that the Protestants exaggerated the natural weakness of man by calling it sin, rather it should be called an infirmity. Melanchthon replied that whether or not we called this evil inclination merely an infirmity it still contends against the commandment of God. The Emperor drew the proceedings to a sudden halt on 18 January 1541 and referred all

further discussion to the Imperial Diet of Regensburg (Ratisbon) called for April of the same year.

Melanchthon went to the Diet of Regensburg on 5 April 1541 with great confidence in the Emperor, he regarded Charles V as a seeker after truth and peace, whereas the Emperor had definite political reasons to desire a strong, united Empire at his back. Charles V decided the procedure for the diet; there was to be a committee formed from three Catholic and three Evangelical theologians. He named them as John Eck, Julius von Pflug and John Gropper for the Catholics and Melanchthon, Bucer and John Pistorius (1503-1583) for the Evangelicals. When the committee met, under the joint presidency of Frederick Count Palatine and Imperial Chancellor Granvella, the Emperor presented them with the "Regensburg Book" with the instruction that they were to correct whatever they found to be contrary to scripture but suffer all that was Christian to remain. This book was the product of a discussion between Bucer and Gropper at Worms. When Luther heard about the Book he remarked: "These people mean well, but these are impossible proposals. Resorting to such means is vain". (67) Melanchthon too thought the whole thing ambiguous and set out to oppose it. Before every open session Melanchthon met with all the Evangelical theologians present to agree on a concerted front. One of these was John Calvin who again represented the city of Strasbourg.

In Part V of this work we will study this fascinating diet in detail from the standpoint of the then Papal Legate, Gaspar Contarini, but here we will make brief mention of the most salient points as they reflect the character of Philip Melanchthon. To begin with agreement was reached on the first four articles covering man before and after

the fall. When the discussions moved on to consider justification they quickly reached an impasse which was only resolved after much work by Contarini with Gropper, Pflug and Eck. Contarini had made a study of the question of justification and was able to influence the Catholic collocutors towards a moderate position. Eventually a union formula was accepted in which Melanchthon saw the Evangelical faith expressed. John Calvin wrote to Farel in Geneva: "You will marvel when you see what has been obtained from the adversaries. Our side has upheld the summary of the true doctrine. There is nothing in the formula which is not found in our writings". (68) Other responses were not as favourable. The Elector John Frederick found it too opaque and sprawling, Luther found nothing good in the amended formula and the Catholic representatives found it in need of supplementation. Eck was reported to be so confounded by the article that he got drunk, fell ill and left the diet never to return. (69) Granvella was so impressed that he thought it just matter for a council. Cardinal Contarini reported his great joy to Rome but the Consistory was of another opinion, they repudiated the formula and nullified any notion of peace attached to it.

Discussions on baptism, good works and the episcopacy resulted in agreement but all else was in disarray. Melanchthon uttered two sayings on the eucharist which have come to be regarded as axiomatic in Lutheran thought: "Nothing has the nature of a sacrament apart from the divinely appointed use", and "Christ is not present for the sake of the bread but for the sake of man". (70) A violent battle eventually broke out over the Church and the sacraments which caused Melanchthon to seek to withdraw from the diet. His refusal to have anything to do with the ambiguous language of the Regensburg Book led the Emperor

to decide that his policy of union around it was now hopeless.

Melanchthon drew up a statement in which he accepted the harmonised agreements on various points in keeping with the Augsburg Confession and Apology and then returned to Wittenberg.

After the 1541 Diet of Regensburg there was a lull in debate. The Emperor eventually persuaded the Pope to call a general council. The Pope promulgated a bull calling for a council to convene at Trent. The bull was read at Nuremberg in 1542. Melanchthon was not troubled by this, he felt that there would be no council while the Emperor was still at war with Francis I and his Turkish allies.

A new and darker mood began to dawn over Germany. War was openly spoken of. This most impressed itself on Melanchthon when he was preparing for the Imperial Diet of Speyer (1544). This diet was aborted which suited Philip well as he was growing tired of trying to find ever new ways of expressing the Evangelical doctrines. He preferred to fall back on the Augsburg Confession and Apology.

Melanchthon was soon relieved of writing memoranda for diets and the last such he wrote was the "Wittenberg Reformation" on behalf of the Wittenberg theologians for the Diet of Worms 1545. The Elector John Frederick was not pleased with this document as he felt it was lacking in a sufficiently distinguished style, however, he approved it and sent it to the Elector Palatine who incorporated it into his order for reform of the Church.

The Saxon Elector also asked Melanchthon to compose a petition to the Emperor saying that the Protestants did not oppose union in

matters of faith but rejecting the council called for Trent. In reply the Emperor demanded that the Evangelicals attend the council and called the Diet of Regensburg for January 1546 to persuade them to take part. Melanchthon was not required to attend this diet but wrote a restatement of the Wittenberg position.

While the Diet of Regensburg was in session Luther died (18 February 1546) in Mansfeld. Melanchthon noted that in his last few months the Reformer had been of a milder disposition and regretted any excesses of the past. He was buried on 22 February 1546 in the Castle Church in Wittenberg. Bugenhagen preached the funeral sermon and Melanchthon gave the Latin address in which he placed Luther alongside Paul and Augustine as a hero of the faith.

A league had been entered into by the Pope and the Emperor before the Diet of Regensburg (1546) to the effect that the Emperor would force the Germans back to the true faith. He revealed his true colours at the diet when he attempted to force the Protestant leaders, the Elector John Frederick and the Landgrave Philip of Hesse, into submission as "Disobedient, disloyal and obstinate destroyers of the common peace". (71) When he had done this the Protestants would bow to the decrees of the General Council of Trent. Charles V made it clear that if the Evangelicals opposed his plan he would call on all the neighbouring Catholic states to take common cause with him and fight the heretics in a holy war. The Evangelicals held fast to their faith and the dogs of war were slipped.

Melanchthon, as ever, was concerned to read the fate of the war

in the portents of heaven. He thought that he read the Emperor's victory in the stars and so set about the publication of two works. He composed the tract "Reasons why the Churches of the Augsburg Confession cling firmly to their doctrine and cannot recognise the judges assembled at Trent". In this tract he set forth the original reasons for the Reformation to show the reformed churchmen why they must persevere in the present ordeal. Philip also wrote a new preface for and re-issued Luther's tract of 1530 "Warning to my dear Germans". His aim in re-issuing this work was to make clear to his readers that taking arms to resist suppression of the true faith was as much self-defence as resisting a murderer in one's own home.

The war went badly for the Evangelicals, especially after Duke Maurice signed a pact with the Emperor and attacked his cousin John Frederick. In November 1546 Wittenberg fell to Spanish troops which caused Melanchthon, who had waited until the end, to flee with his family and Luther's widow to Zerbst. The end came when the Elector John Frederick was defeated by the Emperor on Lochau Heath and taken prisoner. According to the terms of the "Wittenberg Capitulation" he was to remain a prisoner of the Emperor and lose his electoral dignity and lands to Duke Maurice except for a few estates in Thuringia. With the Emperor in Wittenberg Melanchthon felt unsafe in Zerbst and so went to Brunswick and Nordhausen.

The deposed Elector called for his theologians to reassemble at the university at Jena. Melanchthon received invitations to teach in different places but in the end chose to return to Wittenberg, as it was the birthplace of the Reformation, where he had been invited by the

Elector Maurice with the assurance that he would be free to order religion as it had been in Luther's day. This caused a certain split within Lutheranism as the strict Lutherans at Jena claimed the allegiance of all the Evangelical Saxon Dukes and scorned Melanchthon as a tool of the enemy. The general council had by this time moved from Trent to Bologna but the Emperor preferred to act independently and he called a diet at Augsburg for September 1547 where he would personally reform the Church in Germany.

When the Diet of Augsburg (1547) was called the Elector Maurice found himself in a difficult situation as the agent of a Catholic Emperor with the centre of Protestantism in his domain. He asked the Wittenbergers for a memorandum on how he could work for religious peace at the diet. Melanchthon advised him to do nothing in haste but to resist the Tridentine decrees at all costs as they contained so much error. The Emperor was, at the same time, pursuing his plan to revise religion himself. He had the Catholic Bishops Pflug and Helding working in collaboration with John Agricola to produce a book called the "Augsburg Interim" which was to be the basis for religious belief in Germany. In it the doctrine of justification was set forth in a Catholic manner, the mass was interpreted as a commemorative sacrifice and both kinds in communion and the marriage of the clergy was reserved to the general council for decision. There were to be no concessions on Papal power, transubstantiation or Church usage.

When he saw the Augsburg Interim Melanchthon noted the resemblance which it bore to the Regensburg Book. He influenced the Elector Maurice against it so that the prince resisted the Emperor when he delivered

it to the Evangelicals. Charles V was furious with Melanchthon whom he blamed for encouraging John Frederick to disobedience and whom he now perceived to be turning the new Elector in the same way. The Elector required an opinion on the Interim from Melanchthon. He responded by writing two books, one on the basic principles of the Interim and one on justification and the mass in which he showed that the Interim ascribed justification to man's merit and based it on love rather than on faith. Melanchthon's opinions on the Interim were supported by other Evangelical theologians which did not please the Elector.

In order to bring pressure to bear on Melanchthon to make him change his mind, the Elector Maurice turned to an adviser, Christopher von Carlowitz. The letters and entreaties of von Carlowitz are not extant but Philip's reply shows clearly his depressive mood. He insisted that this controversy was not of his making but one which he had been drawn into. He had always aimed to be moderate but this had now evoked hatred and dissatisfaction among his erstwhile friends. He had always been willing to concede on unimportant points so that he could contest all the more vehemently those which were central, and in this spirit he was prepared to recognise papal prestige and episcopal orders as laid out in the Interim but he would resist all concessions on doctrinal points, to death if necessary, because the reforms were justified and truth must be preferred to life itself. When von Carlowitz published this letter Melanchthon was accused of being a turncoat by the strict Lutherans and even his friends rebuked him. Melanchthon was the most hated of all men, despised on all sides with all men's hands turned against him. Yet again he had proved himself to be no diplomat but had placed his trust in an undeserving

man who had abused it.

Before the diet took place the position of the Interim was strengthened by the decrees of the general council. Melancthon wrote against them on behalf of the Wittenbergers describing their inadequate understanding of faith and obscuration of pure doctrine. This was to have little impact on the outcome of the diet where the preponderance of the Catholic party was so great that the Interim was accepted unaltered and elevated to the realm of Imperial law. In its twenty-six chapters the Protestants were ordered to accept the Roman conception of the Church and tradition, merits and works, seven sacraments and the invocation of saints. Married priests were permitted to retain their wives pending the outcome of the general council. It appeared that all the Reformation had achieved was demolished at a single blow.

In South Germany the Interim was put into practice by the use of force but in North Germany the Elector summoned Melancthon to Leipzig where he demanded a memorandum from him. Philip, together with all the Wittenberg theologians, declared that they neither would nor could change true doctrine and to accept this Interim would be a blasphemy as it would require them to renounce as false all their earlier teaching which would put many men's souls in jeopardy. "Though war and destruction now threaten we must regard God's commandment more highly, namely, we must not deny the known truth of the Gospel". (72)

In order to resolve this difficult situation, the Elector Maurice called a territorial diet at Meissen. He attempted to find a middle way between the Interim of his Emperor and the theologians of his people. Melancthon was asked to strike out everything from the Interim

which was false, but even this modest reform, which did not please the stricter Lutherans, was too much for the Elector who wanted the Evangelicals to accept further compliance. Another diet was held in Torgau on 18/19 October 1548 but this produced no results. Melanchthon urged that they should yield and suffer rather than appear defiant but when this view was published, without Melanchthon's approval, it was met with demands that he should be sent into exile outside Saxony. At this time Melanchthon and Bucer were invited to England by Archbishop Cranmer but Melanchthon was given the Elector's protection instead.

In November 1548 discussions resumed in Leipzig and a compromise was reached in the "Leipzig Interim". (73) There was special resentment when it was announced that the Marian festivals and Corpus Christi were to be restored. Melanchthon was prepared to accept the Leipzig Interim under obedience to the Emperor as he believed that such changes which were imposed by law but had no support among the people would soon disappear. He believed that the good intention of saving what he could from the reform excused his compliance by which he aimed at halting open rebellion. Thanks to his presence in Wittenburg no changes in doctrine were introduced there through the Interim and they were allowed freedom of religious practice and thought.

Eventually there were moves towards a religious peace. Pope Julius III was elected in 1550 and, under pressure from the Emperor, reconvened the Council of Trent. Charles V himself moved to Innsbruck so that he could oversee the debates. He demanded that the Evangelicals should send representatives but his stock was so low in Germany that even the German Catholics were not present. The Evangelicals met to discuss their attitude at Dresden. Melanchthon thought it best to attend

the Council provided that they were not forced into a false position. They agreed that they would stand on the Augsburg Confession and the Catechism but to Melanchthon fell the task of preparing an explanation of the Confession which was to be sent to the Council by envoys in the name of the theologians not the princes. Melanchthon worked on this treatise with Camerarius in Dessau. It appeared in 1551 as "The repetition of the Augsburg Confession" and was printed as the "Saxon Confession". (74) Starting with the present, Melanchthon described the course which the Reformation had taken and then went on to give an enumeration of the Roman abuses. He emphasised the doctrinal agreement between the Evangelical and the Early Church and supported the foundations of all Evangelical doctrines. He contrasted every Roman error with the correcting Protestant view. In confessing the Evangelical faith Melanchthon had refuted the Roman Church's theology and culture. In order to give the Saxon Confession confessional status Melanchthon submitted it to all the theologians and superintendents of Saxony, the theologians of Pomerania and many others who thereby ratified Melanchthon's work. The "Wurttemberg Confession" (75) which had been written by Brentz for the same purpose coincided in content with the Saxon Confession.

In January 1552, much against his personal will, Melanchthon received orders to journey to Trent for the session of the council. He went as far as Nuremberg where he remained to work on his writing. At this time the Elector Maurice was involved in a remarkable piece of political juggling by which he turned against his patron the Emperor, by allying himself with the French and Protestant Germans and ensuring that he played on the split opening between King Ferdinand and his brother, Charles V.

The result of all this was that Maurice grew in power and everyone else lost out. The fraternal union among the Hapsburgs did not count for much, Charles was an enfeebled man whose eyes were set on Trent alone so that he failed to see or prepare for the German advance. He rallied once in an alliance with the Margrave Albert Alcibiades but had at last to sue for peace with the Elector Maurice. Melanchthon had wisely refused to move from Nuremberg in these political circumstances and when the Council abruptly broke up with Maurice's advance on Innsbruck, he returned to Wittenberg.

The military campaign of the Elector Maurice changed the situation in Germany completely. The Treaty of Passau, which had ended hostilities with the Emperor, promised an Imperial Diet to convene on the religious questions. The Evangelical theologians met to clarify their position at Naumberg. Melanchthon drafted a discussion document in which it was agreed that they would refuse unconditionally to accept Papal doctrine or the Interim but would appeal only to the Augsburg Confession.

The Diet of Augsburg (1555) opened in February and went on until September. The Emperor did not attend as he was preparing to lay aside his crown and retire. King Ferdinand represented the Imperial power but already a breakdown in the Empire could be seen by the way in which few German princes attended. Melanchthon took no part in the diet and so missed the significance of the signing of the Religious Peace, by which territorial Lords were given the freedom to chose the religion of their domains. This peace lasted sixty-three years and allowed toleration of both the old and the new religion with permission for anyone who didn't like the religion of his prince to move to a territory which suited him. One factor was that only Catholicism and

Lutheranism were allowed which made the Anabaptists and other sects outlaws in every land.

One last attempt to reconcile Catholic and Protestant doctrine was to be made at a meeting of theologians at the Synod of Worms on 24 August 1557. In the two years since the Religious Peace there had been an Imperial Diet but it had been fruitless. There was very little hope on Melanchthon's part that anything would come out of this meeting but he readily agreed to take part out of respect for Ferdinand, the Emperor-apparent. To prepare for this synod a meeting of Evangelical princes and theologians took place at Frankfurt in June 1557. Here a Melanchthonian memorial was drawn up but not by Philip himself. Apparently the Swiss were eager for the synod and Calvin wrote to Melanchthon in the hope that they could arrange a private colloquy at the same time.

The synod was overshadowed by disputes among the Evangelicals. The strict Lutherans, led by Flacius, demanded the condemnation of many groups less rigid than themselves including Zwingli, Osiander, Melanchthon and the Adiaphorists. Eventually the Flacians left in high dudgeon but the Catholics, who viewed such wrangling with amusement, abandoned the synod because of the lack of a concerted Protestant voice.

In the last years of his life, Melanchthon once again returned to open debate with the Catholics. Two former Protestant professors had deserted the reformed faith and had become Catholics. Both Theobald Thamer, sometime of Marburg university, and Frederick Staphylus, sometime

of Königsberg, challenged Melanchthon both orally and in writing.

The major Catholic threat during these years came from the Jesuits in Bavaria. They had compiled thirty-one questions which they sent to local Evangelicals in an attempt to win them over to their belief. When this came to Melanchthon's attention he wrote a pithy preface to the questionnaire and published them together to expose the Jesuits. He also realised that a more detailed refutation was required so he wrote the "Reply to the Bavarian Inquisition" (1559) which he dedicated to the Count Palatine Wolfgang and in which Melanchthon dealt, not only with the Jesuits, but also with the Flacians, Anabaptists and Anti-Trinitarians. In this work Melanchthon made a significant contribution to ecclesiology. The mark of belonging to the Church is the right use of Word and Sacrament. Outward marks such as apostolic succession and external authority are only secondary in importance compared with the primary internal marks: Word, Sacrament and, Melanchthon's original contribution, obedience to the Churchly office. The visible sign of the true Church is that it clings to Christ through his Word and Sacrament and not any ecclesiastical custom or usage. When he dealt with justification he declared that the Tridentine formula which denied the certainty of faith went against both the biblical evidence and the Fathers who taught "sola fides". He described the Catholic doctrines of the mass, invocation of saints and purgatory as intolerable in the light of the gospel.

The "Reply to the Bavarian Inquisition" was received with enthusiasm and gained wide circulation. Right up to his deathbed Melanchthon regarded this work as his last testimony to the truth and, when the Leipzig Consistory asked him to collect his most important works into

a Corpus Doctrinae, he included this book in his list. Knowing that he was getting older, Melanchthon decided to revise his Loci for the last time which he published in 1555. This edition of the Loci, together with the altered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Saxon Confession, the examination of ordinands and the declaration concerning the writings of Stancar together with his Reply to the Bavarian Inquisition formed Melanchthon's own selection of his most important works for the Leipzig Consistory, the preface for which he wrote on his sixty-third birthday, 16 February 1560.

His end was near and thoughts of death occupied Melanchthon. He wrote on a sheet of paper why he didn't fear death. On the left hand side he wrote: you will be redeemed from sin and set free from cares and from the fury of theologians. On the right hand side he wrote: you come to the light, you will look upon God and his Son, you will understand the wonderful mysteries which you could not comprehend in this life: why you were so made and not otherwise, and in what the union of the two natures in Christ consists. (76)

Philip Melanchthon died on 19 April 1560. His last prayers were for the unity of the Church for which he had worked so fervently. Earlier in his life he had said that he would gladly purchase Christian unity with his own life if only that were possible but it was not to be. The author of the greatest Protestant confession of all time who had applied all his considerable genius to finding a middle way between the Reformers and the old religion had died at a time when the two sides were actually entrenched. The Religious Peace had brought about an end to hostilities but with it the impetus to find an amiable solution was lost. The two sides were doomed to an apartheid, a separate

development with little or no interchange of ideas for the next four hundred years. Philip's life had seen him attacked on all sides as a crypto-Calvinist and a recalcitrant papist. Neither is true.

He lived, as he died, with the fervent hope and prayer for the unity of the Church which he served.

Part IV

Philip Melanchthon: Conciliator between various groups of Protestants

Chapter One. Melanchthon and the Anabaptists

The final part of Melanchthon's conciliatory genius which we must examine is his work with the various groups within Protestantism. He regarded all such divisions as a great misfortune which weakened the Evangelical cause and broke up the "beautiful unity of the Church". The first area of conciliation was between the Evangelical Church and fanatics and Anabaptists. Perhaps conciliation is not the right word here as Philip was harsh and scathing in his treatment of such groups as we shall see.

As we have already noted in Part I Melanchthon encountered the Zwickau Weavers, Carlstadt and other fanatics in 1521 when Luther was in the Wartburg. Philip was a young man at this time, only twenty-four years old, and recently converted to the Evangelical cause. He did not have the experience or personal charism of the Reformer but nevertheless found himself "in charge" during Luther's enforced absence. The fury and violence which accompanied these fanatics left a permanent scar on Philip's mind. To him fanaticism led to anarchy and an overthrow of the God-given order of things. Philip was by nature an authoritarian. He believed that the temporal rulers of the earth had been established by God as part of his plan of creation. Anything which threatened to overthrow such a power was to be resisted. This can be seen in Philip's reaction to the Peasants' War and particularly with reference to Thomas Müntzer in Mülhausen. Melanchthon regarded Müntzer as the

archetypal rebel who treated the revelation of God with contempt and was openly possessed by his own conceit. No wonder that the scars which these episodes made on the young Melanchthon left him with a profound distrust and even hatred for all "Anabaptists and Fanatics" from then on.

After Melanchthon returned from his first visit to Thuringia in 1527 he was struck by the need to deal with the Anabaptists who held great influence both in popular religion and in society. Melanchthon used the term "Anabaptist" to denote the entire "left wing" of the reform movement without any discrimination between the various parties involved. His first work on the Anabaptists appeared in the same year. It was short and aimed only to give a few arguments in favour of infant baptism. (77) He compared infant baptism to circumcision which are both signs of promised grace and eternal life given by God to children. One central disagreement between the reforms surfaced at this time. The Anabaptists, along with many of the Radical Reformers, argued that nothing could be maintained which was not commanded by scripture; infant baptism is not so commanded and must not be practised. Melanchthon's reply was that, although there was no direct command for infant baptism, there is the example of circumcision and the saying of Jesus "suffer little ones to come unto me"; (78) so where there is no express prohibition in scripture but a definite example, then this should prevail and so infants should be baptised. Philip also dealt with the Anabaptists' objections that infants cannot possess faith and so should not be baptised. He replied that baptism contained the Word of God without which no-one can acquire faith and so infants should be baptised so that their sins might be remitted by the Word of God and they can then come to faith in their saviour. He was to re-work

and strengthen this argument on original sin as the controversy developed.

Melanchthon's major treatise on the Anabaptists appeared in 1528 and was translated into German by Justus Jonas in which form it received wide circulation. (79) This treatise was divided under six sub-titles:

- a. concerning the function of the sacrament
- b. concerning baptism
- c. concerning the function of baptism
- d. concerning the baptism of John and Christ
- e. concerning infant baptism
- f. concerning community of goods

a. concerning the function of the sacrament.

Melanchthon outlined the Anabaptists' belief that the sacrament was established as a sign to distinguish Christians from heathens; it serves simply as a confession of faith before men which attracts men to the faith. In reply, Philip asserts that the sacrament is more than just a sign, it is rather an indication of God's will towards us. The sacrament reminds us of what we have received from God, it does not in itself create righteousness, but our faith is aroused, fortified and strengthened as a result of the sacrament.

b. concerning baptism.

According to Philip, baptism is an outward sign of repentance and forgiveness of sins and as such was established by John the Baptist. "He who believes and is baptised shall be saved". (80) Baptism is unrepeatable and lasts for a whole lifetime. The Anabaptists were saying

that someone who was baptised as an infant should be rebaptised when they were old enough to profess their belief but Philip asks how one is to know that subsequent baptisms are valid if the first isn't and gives the logical result of such a theology as daily baptism.

c. concerning the function of baptism.

The function of baptism for Melanchthon is to arouse and strengthen faith. It arouses our faith by terrifying us by looking at the consequences of sin and God's anger against it. We are strengthened by thoughts of repentance and the knowledge of God's grace in forgiveness. He quotes the example of Gideon's faith being aroused and strengthened by the fleece and so our baptism is a strengthening against doubt, a comfort in affliction and a way of turning affliction into a means to strengthen us in faith.

d. concerning the baptism of John and Christ.

Melanchthon included this section in the belief that the Anabaptists held there to be a difference between the baptism of John and the baptism of Christ; he could see no such difference. The difference lay in the person and the office of the baptiser: John was sent to preach forgiveness, Christ was sent to take away sin and send forth the Holy Spirit.

e. concerning infant baptism.

Melanchthon's treatment of this question expands that given in 1527 but does not substantially add to it. He bases his claim on (i) Old Testament circumcision; just as the circumcised infant partook of God's grace, so the baptised infant partakes of the forgiveness of sins and thus has his original sin blotted out; (ii) Mtt. 19:14 "suffer little children to come unto me...for of such is the kingdom of heaven"; thus

proving that infants are included in the kingdom of heaven. Philip distinguishes two principal objections to infant baptism: (i) that infants are incapable of understanding or professing faith; to which he answered that, as the promise of God belonged to the circumcised infant, so the forgiveness of God (entry into the kingdom) belongs to the baptised infant. According to the Anabaptists' argument all children, including heathens, belong to the kingdom of God or none do; since neither is the case, it must be admitted that the forgiveness of sins, admission to the kingdom, is granted only to those who are baptised. (ii) That scripture nowhere commands infants to be baptised; to which Melancthon replies that it is nowhere forbidden and quotes the example of circumcision. Philip rehearses his arguments about the logical outcome of Anabaptist theology being daily rebaptism and concludes by saying that if the Anabaptists say that children can be admitted to the kingdom of God, following Mtt. 19:14, but deny them infant baptism, then they are saying that forgiveness of sins exists without the Word and Sacrament and therefore depart from the unbroken tradition of the Church.

f. concerning community of goods.

Philip holds this teaching of the Anabaptists to be revolutionary and his hatred for the disruption of society rather confuses his argument. The Anabaptists claim that, while this is not explicitly commanded by scripture, it is not forbidden and was practised by the Early Church in the same circumstances as were now being experienced by the Hutterian Brethren, namely in the face of persecution. Philip's reply was that if such action is required of Christians it would have been commanded by the apostles, but no such word of scripture can be found. He thus completely reverses the argument which he invoked against infant baptism.

This treatise did little to halt the spread of the Anabaptists and their revolutionary spirit led them into conflict with the authorities. In a letter to Friedrich Myconius, Lutheran pastor and superintendent in Gotha in February 1530, ⁽⁸¹⁾ Melanchthon notes that all Anabaptists owe their origin to Storch and his followers whom Melanchthon had saved from death in 1521 when Elector Frederick wanted to execute them; of which mildness Philip now repented. He went on to commend John of Saxony for the execution of six Anabaptists on 18 January 1530 and says that it is of the utmost importance that the civil authorities act with severity to keep down the anti-citizen, revolutionary Anabaptists. He called Moses and Augustine to his defence in prescribing death for those guilty of open slander. Elector John's executions of 1530 did nothing to dampen the Anabaptists' zeal and in October 1531 he consulted Melanchthon concerning several more members of the sect which he held in captivity. Melanchthon conferred with Luther and replied that Elector John should punish them in accordance with the laws which they had broken. He classified the Anabaptists into three groups according to fanaticism: ⁽⁸²⁾

- a. Instigators and those who continue to preach and teach in spite of the mandate: execute with the sword.
- b. Followers, people who have been led astray who believe any of the following points:
 - i. No Christian should hold government office.
 - ii. Christians should divide and share their goods with others.
 - iii. No Christian should swear an oath.
 - iv. The Church must be reformed and all godless people destroyed.
 - v. Charging interest on money loaned is wrong.

These people should be executed.

- c. Those who erred through misunderstanding but might be recalled to the true faith: they are to be instructed as to their errors and, if they make a public confession, are to be received back into fellowship with a severe warning. If they will not recant but are not guilty of the crimes listed in group b. above, they are to be exiled or given a sentence lighter than execution.

By the year 1534 open revolution was being preached in Münster by the city preacher, Bernard Rothmann, who wrote a book called "Restitution". Rothmann had been influenced by the teaching of Jan Matthys and began to advocate the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. In 1535 Philip published his reply: "Several propositions against the teaching of the Anabaptists offered by Philip Melanchthon".⁽⁸³⁾ This work deals essentially with the social, revolutionary nature of the sect:

- a. Some Anabaptists teach that before the day of judgement there will be established a kingdom of Christ on earth, in which the pure, holy and pious will rule and all ungodly kings and princes will be annihilated. Philip declares this to be false teaching and quotes Jn. 18:36 to the effect that the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom.
- b. Anabaptists teach that subjects should resist the established civil authorities and drive them out of office. Philip describes this as outright revolution and contrary to the teaching of scripture that subjects should be obedient to the magistrates.
- c. The Anabaptists teach that preachers and teachers should take the sword and drive out ungodly magistrates. This is terrible blindness according to Philip. Teachers and preachers are commissioned by the saying of Jesus: "As the Father has sent me so I send you" and should take their example from him.

- d. The Anabaptists teach that in their new kingdom and new Church there will be no hypocrites or godless persons, everyone will be pure and holy. Philip sees this as impossible as men cannot see and know the hearts of their fellow men and so cannot eject hypocrites from the Church.

Melanchthon concluded this work by noting three false points of Anabaptists' doctrine: that Christians should practice community of goods, are permitted to practise polygamy and that the flesh of Christ did not come from the flesh of Mary. The last two are new but seem to be in keeping with many fanatical sects; as soon as the reins are released men find that they can justify licentiousness and seek to divorce their fleshly nature from that of Christ. In a later edition of this work Melanchthon wrote that there is no point in trying to distinguish between a good Anabaptist and a bad one, they had all been torn from true teaching by the devil and no one devil is more pious than another.

Following this work Melanchthon was summoned by Elector John in December 1535 to preside at a theological examination of four Anabaptists. A variety of points were covered: trinity, forgiveness of sins, community of goods, obedience to civil authorities, baptism, swearing of oaths and marriage among them. (84) On 19 January 1536 Philip sent John of Saxony a report of the examination with the admonition that severe punishment was necessary even for those who did not act like rogues. (85)

Later in the same year the Elector commissioned Melanchthon to draw up a mandate against the Anabaptists which appeared on

10 April 1536. (86) In this mandate Philip formulated the prevalent beliefs of the Anabaptists as follows:

- a. Christians cannot and should not hold government office.
- b. Christians should serve in no other capacity except as servants of the gospel.
- c. Christians are forbidden to swear oaths.
- d. Christians should practise community of goods, they should not own private property.
- e. An Anabaptist should leave his non-Anabaptist spouse.
- f. Infant baptism is not right.
- g. Infants have no sin; original sin and natural weakness of the flesh is not sin.
- h. That alone is sin which a man of his own free will commits.

At the same time as this mandate Philip wrote a popular pamphlet: "Publication of several unchristian points which the Anabaptists advance". (87) John of Saxony endorsed this pamphlet and ordained that it should be read in every church in Saxony every third Sunday. Philip had two main reasons for writing it, first, he wanted simple-minded people to see that the Anabaptists came from the devil and were against God, second, that everyone should see that the magistrates were bound to check the sect with severe punishments. He pointed to Münster as the ultimate result of all Anabaptist teaching where the fanatics began by advocating peace and refusing to take up the sword but ended by driving out the citizens amidst robbery and rebellion. He regarded them as the agents of the devil who so blinded men's hearts that they regarded the greatest sins as highest holiness. In this pamphlet Philip sets forth and attacks six points of Anabaptist teaching. He defends the Christian magistracy's use of the sword by reference to

the Old Testament kings. He quotes Rom. 13:5 as proof that men must recognise the authority of their masters and not just divine authority. On the question of swearing oaths, Philip sees this as the very basis of civilized society and quotes II Cor. 1:23 and Heb. 6:16 in his defence. As far as community of goods is concerned, he ~~sees~~ this as appealing to the rabble who don't want to work anyway; the civil system, as ordained by God, has private property at the heart of it. St Paul (1 Cor. 7:10) is cited as a contradiction to their claim that an unbelieving spouse should be divorced. Finally, he sets out his 1528 arguments in favour of infant baptism.

In May 1536 Philip of Hesse wrote to the Wittenberg theologians for advice concerning thirty Anabaptists whom he had recently captured. Melanchthon wrote a memorandum on the matter which was subscribed to by Luther, Bugenhagen and Cruciger: "That the civil authorities are obliged to oppose the Anabaptists with bodily punishment". (88)

Of the theologians involved in the memorandum Melanchthon took the most severe position. He divided Anabaptists into two groups:

- a. Those who take action against civil government in that they promulgate seditious teachings. Philip regarded it as obvious that the rebellious teachings as previously set out are seditious because if everyone practised them murder and robbery could not be curbed. Governments, he said, are established to punish the wrong-doer, it is clear from scripture that these teachings are wrong, therefore the government should forcefully oppose and punish such teachers as they see fit. He made a clear distinction between punishing on account of the Anabaptists' faith, which he is not advocating, and on account of their wrong teaching, for which the correct punishment should be death, certainly for the stubborn who refuse to recant. Philip, like all

learned men of his time, approved of the magistrates taking the life of a man who killed another man's body; now he extends this duty to include the execution of those who kill other men's souls. Such an extension was generally approved of at the time.

- b. The second group promulgate false but not necessarily seditious teaching, e.g. against infant baptism, original sin and the established church. The civil authorities should punish these people, ultimately, for the stubborn, with death. However, Philip counsels that judgement must be tempered with reason, everyone must be given the chance to recant and those who do so must be given a lighter sentence.

This was the last of Melanchthon's writings against the Anabaptists for twenty-one years until in 1557 he was asked to write a memorandum on the subject for distribution within the Lutheran Church which was presented at the Synod of Worms. This memorandum was called: "Proceduree for dealing with Anabaptists". (89) It shows the more settled times in which it was written and lays out a detailed procedure to be followed by pastors to detect Anabaptists, how once captured they are to be instructed and given the chance to recant, how long they are to be kept in prison to ensure that their recantation was genuine and finally that those who persevere in this error are to be put to death.

Again Melanchthon divided the Anabaptists into two groups according to the lies which they teach. The seditious lies are those which threaten the state and are as stated in the memorandum to Philip of Hesse (1536). The non-seditious lies include all those previously listed with the addition of:

- a. Christ was not subject to original sin and ever since his birth original sin has ceased to bind men.

- b. God is one, as the Jews teach. The Christian teaching of an eternal Son and Holy Ghost is discarded.
- c. God reveals himself in addition to the word, the ministerial office and the sacrament (i.e. by private revelation).
- d. A sacrament is only an outward sign or symbol to men and not an application of grace, thus the Lord's Supper is only an outward sign of the brotherhood.
- e. Man is made righteous before God by his holy re-baptism, through suffering, through self-fulfilment of the laws and through special revelations.
- f. Many Anabaptists say that they cannot fall again under God's wrath; when such commit even adultery they say that they are led by the Spirit.

Having surveyed in considerable detail Philip's writings against the Anabaptists, how can we conclude and summarise his thought? We may proceed under four headings.

a. Sedition

The whole of Melanchthon's career can be characterised by his desire to find a conciliatory position between opposing factions while not deviating from essential truths. In fact, in his later years, his desire to mollify and placate opposing parties led him to be regarded as a turncoat and betrayer of the Reform. However, in the case of the Anabaptists, the opposite is true, Melanchthon is seen as a "hardliner" from the beginning and, if anything, he becomes more intolerant as he grows older. This stems from Philip's concept of human authority and civil government being directly given by God and anything which rebels against that and threatens to undermine it is a direct assault upon God and to be resisted with all force. His experience with the Zwickau Prophets in his early days in Wittenberg had a profound influence on

Philip, from that time onwards he saw all religious fanaticism leading to civil unrest and disorder and thus as being opposed to God and so to be resisted. His early failure in handling Carlstadt and the Zwickau Prophets, and the horror and barbarity of the Peasants' War which he attributed largely to fanatical preaching, meant that he was at his most intolerant when there was a threat of sedition. Had the Anabaptists' theology not led them to challenge and overthrow society as Melanchthon believed it to have been ordained by God, then his opposition would probably have been confined to conciliatory colloquies rather than harsh demands for execution. As Philip believed that a threat to the received order was an affront to God, one cannot say that his opposition to the Anabaptists was directed mainly at preventing rebellion, but it is true to say that it was this crucial element of sedition which cast the die of Melanchthon's opposition.

b. Who are the Anabaptists?

Melanchthon failed to distinguish between the various groups within the "left wing" of the Reformation. In common with many mainstream Churchmen of his time, and later historians, he used the term "Anabaptist" in a generic sense for any doctrine of the "left wing". His analysis of "Anabaptist" teaching included views held by the Swiss Brethren, Hutterian Brethren, the Anti-Trinitarians (perhaps Servetus) and the Illuminates (perhaps David Joris).

c. Ecclesiology

Melanchthon differed from the Anabaptists in his Ecclesiology. For him the Church is an instrument and occasion of God's grace; the spiritual quality of its members was not its most important aspect. To destroy the notion of the instrumentality of the Church constituted

heresy. The Anabaptists saw the Church primarily as a body of believers who had been forgiven by virtue of their individual faith independent of any sacramental intervention by the Church.

d. What is warranted by scripture?

Melanchthon and the Anabaptists differed on the fundamental reformation question of what is warranted by scripture. Melanchthon, along with most Lutherans, believed that any practice of the Church which had a sound rationale in antiquity could be kept provided that it wasn't forbidden by the scriptures; so he was prepared to accept infant baptism. The Anabaptists, along with many of the Radical Reformers, believed that a Church practice had to be explicitly warranted by scripture if it was to be properly maintained in the Reformed Church. This was one area of disagreement where even Philip could find no means for reconciliation.

Chapter Two. Debates with Radical Reformers

Luther was not alone in seeing corruption of doctrine and practice within the Catholic Church. It may well have been that the Reformation would have taken place anyway even if Luther had died in his cradle. As soon as he set forth his public critique on the errors of Rome many began to tune their thoughts in a similar direction. Not all of these were of the same stolid character as Luther nor had they all been formed by the same monastic regime which taught patience and perseverance. Many of the other reformers moved faster and farther away from the old religion than did Luther and his immediate circle. Some were labelled "fanatics" and soon burnt themselves out but based in Switzerland there grew up a solid body of Radical Reformers who would not accept the "limited" reform of Luther, as they termed it. For men like Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer and Calvin the Lutheran solution did not go nearly far enough. Doctrine must be completely pure and anything which has not a clear mandate from scripture must be removed.

Philip Melanchthon found himself in constant dialogue with the Radical theologians. To him they represented a shattering of the unity of the Church which had only been rent in two by Luther. There were many basic differences of opinion between the divergent groups within Protestantism but the main questions were sacraments, the Lord's Supper, predestination and the interpretation of scripture.

As early as the Second Diet of Speyer (1529) there had been an attempt by the Imperial party to divide and thus weaken the Evangelical factions. In the resolution of 7 April 1529, which returned to the

prohibition on reform as laid out at the Diet of Worms (1521), a statement about the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist had been included which Philip saw as being directed against the Zwinglians. While he did not agree with the eucharistic doctrine of Zwingli he demanded that he should be allowed to present his case and have a fair hearing.

When the Protestant princes decided to band together for mutual support they included the Swiss in the pact even though Luther and Melanchthon objected on the basis that doctrinal agreement should precede political union. However, as always in the course of the Reformation, the politicians won the day and the theologians were overruled.

Since 1526 there had been a pamphlet war going on between the Saxon reformers and the Swiss, Zwingli and Oecolampadius, over the nature of the eucharist. Melanchthon supported Luther in his view that the body and blood of Christ were truly present in the eucharist. In support of this view he called the scriptures to bear witness, in contrast to Zwingli's view which he felt relied more on some philosophical presuppositions, an Erasmian influence and the teaching of some Fathers of the Church. The Landgrave Philip wanted to cement his political alliance between the Saxons and the Swiss by means of a theological agreement. He proposed that there should be a colloquy between the two schools but Luther and Melanchthon were not in favour as they felt that the time was not right and they feared another impetuous fiasco similar to Philip of Hesse's involvement in the von Pack affair. Finally the Elector John of Saxony called a colloquy to be held in the autumn of 1529 in Nürnberg. Philip of Hesse wasn't happy about this and managed

to have it transferred to Marburg where he had established the first Protestant university in 1527. Melanchthon argued for some neutral, well-disposed, Catholic observers to be present to show that there was no political intrigue afoot. The Landgrave opposed this as political intrigue was precisely his intention. During the summer of 1529 Luther and Melanchthon drew up the Schwabach Articles ⁽⁹⁰⁾ to express their opening position at the colloquy.

The Swiss arrived in Marburg on 29 September 1529 and were represented by Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Bucer, Hedio and Jacob Strum. The Saxons arrived the next day in the persons of Luther, Melanchthon, Jonas, Crugiger, Menius, Brentz, Osiander and Stephen Agricola. It was decided to pair off the principal theologians so that they could conduct parallel discussions. Melanchthon was paired with Zwingli as it was felt that Luther and he would too quickly reach an impasse and Luther was paired with Oecolampadius. For two days they talked over several points and removed many misunderstandings. Among the points discussed were the divinity of Christ, original sin, the scriptures, the trinity and the eucharist. Although some common ground was found on preliminary minor points there was disagreement on the essentials.

When they came to discuss the eucharist there was no common meeting point. Luther and Melanchthon argued on the basis of the trinity and incarnation that Christ's body was ubiquitous but Zwingli based his argument on the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of the Father and thus claimed that Christ's body was in heaven and could not be in the elements during the Supper. Luther held that Christ was physically present in the Supper, body and blood, literally and truly present in

the elements. He could not accept transubstantiation but he did not deny the physical presence. Zwingli's position was that the entire Supper was a memorial and that Christ was not physically present at all as he was in heaven at the right hand of the Father and could not be in two places at once. Melanchthon was rather undecided. He certainly didn't agree with Zwingli and found much to support Luther's view in the scriptures and in the Fathers but this was inconclusive. Melanchthon introduced his concept of a mysterious understanding of the eucharist by which he maintained that somehow there was a mysterious unification with the Saviour at the Lord's Supper. He did not understand how the body and blood of Christ could be in the bread and wine but he acknowledged that somehow the holy body takes on the shape of bread. In this position he was further from Zwingli than he was from Luther. The only ground of eucharistic agreement was that eating is equivalent to faith and so they could speak of "spiritual manducation". Hedio, one of the Swiss party, reported that Melanchthon had undertaken to continue the search for agreement on the eucharist and it is possible that Philip was behind the attempt to achieve some common statement at the end of the colloquy. Philip did continue to explore eucharistic doctrine and in his treatise "Opinions of several ancient authors regarding the Lord's Supper" (1530) he included this declaration of his own position: "I cannot believe otherwise than that Christ is truly present in the sacrament; I know no reason why he should not be. The sacraments are instituted as divine means to arouse our spirits to faith and not merely as a sign to distinguish us Christians from the heathen. To avert controversy and offence one needs only to keep simply and without speculation to the words of scripture". (91)

The colloquy broke down on 3 October 1529 with very limited agreement. In order to preserve some sort of a united front Philip of Hesse persuaded Luther to draw up the Marburg Articles ⁽⁹²⁾ which are a restatement of generally agreed Evangelical beliefs for the first fourteen articles covering the trinity, incarnation, salvation, justification by faith, infant baptism, uselessness of good works etc., but upon the fifteenth article no agreement could be reached as Luther had written that Christ's body and blood were truly present in the eucharist. All present, from both parties, signed the articles with the addition that, although they could not agree on the eucharist, they should show Christian love to one another and pray for their mutual enlightenment.

After the Diet of Augsburg it became clear that sooner or later the Emperor would use force to bring the Evangelicals back to Rome. On 27 February 1531 the Schmalkaldic League was formed by the Protestants as a self-defence pact. This included both Zwinglians and Lutherans which strengthened the military and political union at the expense of the religious where Philip was still working away to achieve some kind of mutually agreeable formula.

It is instructive to see how Philip revised his earlier thinking when he reworked his Loci in 1535. His desire was to look at three points in particular which all touched on his discussions with the Radicals: election, tradition and the eucharist. Various encounters can be seen to have influenced his work. His encounter with John Campanus and the anti-trinitarian treatise of Michael Servetus ⁽⁹³⁾ is one example. Melancthon had met Servetus when he travelled in Germany but was shocked by his publication in which he denied the doctrine

of the trinity. This caused Philip to emphasise the centrality of the doctrine of the trinity and a correct understanding of Christology to the Christian faith as he expressed it in the Loci.

Similarly, Philip's encounters with the Anabaptists caused him to give a lucid rationale for infant baptism. "It is certain that the Kingdom of God and the promise of salvation appertains to children. But there is no salvation outside the Church where there is no word and no sacrament. Therefore children must be united to the Church, and the sign must be applied which testifies that to them appertains the promise". (94)

Melanchthon's view of election stands between Pelagianism and Determinism, between Luther's over-emphasis on the love of God and Calvin's doctrine of irresistible grace. Right knowledge of God is given in the gospel and a man's conversion is wrought by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit and the free action of man's will which must not resist the call to election which is issued by the mercy of God. The fruit of this faith in God is good works which become necessary testimonies to eternal life. Philip stresses both the natural and the divine law and hints that, even after the fall, man has an awareness that his origin is from God. Man is saved by the forgiveness of sins which proceeds from faith in Christ and is for his sake.

Philip identifies four ages of the Church before his own:

- a. The age of Christ and the apostles.
- b. The age of Origen in which Neoplatonism and Christianity became connected.
- c. The age of Augustine.
- d. The age of secularization during the middle ages.

Luther inaugurated the new age of the Church by setting the light of true doctrine back on the lampstand. In this way Melanchthon traces the true preaching of Christ from antiquity through to the Evangelical faith thus rejecting the abuses of Rome and asserting that the reformers now represent the true Church of Christ. Melanchthon has now to tackle the question of tradition. The Church stands under Christ, its head, and is bound first and foremost to the Word of God to which it must always be true and with which there must always be an agreement in doctrine. The Church is made up of men so it must heed the testimony of its members and, where these coincide with the internal testimony of the Word, they are to be seen as external authorities to defend the truth of scripture.

The only major departure in this version of the Loci from the teaching of the Confession and the Apology comes on the question of the Lord's Supper. Philip had been convinced by Oecolampadius that the ancient Church contained two separate conceptions of the Supper, both a mystical and a symbolic interpretation of the presence of Christ. In an effort to prevent further disputation and, no doubt, because of his own uncertain state of mind, Melanchthon said nothing of the connection of Christ with the elements but preferred only to speak of a spiritual presence of Christ and of inner communion with him. He laid emphasis on the Supper as the covenant of Christ's promise to his followers: "This cup is the New Testament, that is, the witness of the new promise. The sum of the gospel or promise in these words is, "This is my body which is given for you". Also: "Which is shed for you for the remission of sins". Therefore the principal purpose of this ceremony is to testify that the things promised in the gospel, remission of sins and justification on account of Christ, are presented. As the chief

thing we should consider that the sacrament is a sign of grace, that this Supper is the sign of the New Testament. But what is the New Testament? Certainly it is the promise of the remission of sins and of reconciliation on account of Christ. Also this ceremony profits when we add faith, that is, believe that these promises belong to us, and that the sign is presented to our eyes and mind, to incite us to faith and to quicken the faith in us. For Christ testifies that his benefits belong to us when he gives us his body, and makes us his members, than which no closer union can be conceived. Likewise he testifies that he is active in us because he is life. He gives blood to testify that he washes us. When we see these things done in that most holy Supper, we ought to have faith". (95)

It was clear from the Loci of 1535 that Melanchthon was branching away from the strict Lutheran line on his own authority. Luther was aware of this divergence but for friendship's sake he remained silent thus allowing us the logical conclusion that he didn't consider these differences to be of great importance.

Some of Luther's pupils attacked Philip over his views on justification and the use of the will. They questioned whether he was allowing value to man's activity over against the activity of God as Erasmus had done. Melanchthon, in an attempt to explain justification to simple Christians, had spoken of repentance as the condition of justification, which led Conrad Cordatus to accuse him of shifting closer to the Catholic view and endangering Luther's doctrine of justification. Melanchthon heard news of these accusations while at Württemberg helping with the reform of Tübingen university. He wrote

to the Wittenberg professors: "I know that Luther thinks as I do, but certain ignorant men cling to his strong expressions without asking whither they lead. I do not wish to fight with them". (96) Luther also wished to avoid a controversy but Cordatus was joined in his attacks by Jacob Schenk of Freiberg. The Elector enquired into the situation and had Chancellor Brück confer with Luther and Bugenhagen. Some of Melanchthon's own pupils turned against him and as the years went by he felt more and more lonely. He gave vent to his anger in an address "On the ingratitude of the cuckoo".

Philip also had a tense relationship with Andrew Osiander of Nuremberg. He did not share Osiander's views on justification and confession but admonished him to peace which served only to drive their disagreements underground for years until they erupted with a heated controversy in the 1550's.

There was a certain strain between Luther and Melanchthon during these years but they always maintained an attachment to each other. In July 1536 Melanchthon was exhausted and sought permission to go to visit his brother and Camerarius. Rumours were rife that there had been a split between the two but Philip denied it and the rumours ceased when he returned to Wittenburg on 5 November 1536. In that same year John Agricola joined the theology faculty at Wittenberg. After a period of peaceful co-operation Agricola took up the controversy over the preaching of the law which he had begun ten years earlier. He repeated his assertion that the gospel alone leads man to conversion and that the law is completely superfluous. Luther was enraged, issued a strong reprimand and demanded a retraction. Agricola acquiesced but left Wittenberg in 1540 for Berlin where he cherished a

resentment for Luther and Melanchthon. This common opposition to Agricola drove the two reformers closer together and reinforced whatever weakness there was in their personal relationship.

The crucial area of disagreement was over the eucharist. It was central to all the reformers' thinking. Abuses in the pre-reformation mass had led them radically to reconsider not only the function and form of the Lord's Supper but also what was happening and in what sense Christ could be said to be present in the Supper. It was this last question which caused most dispute among the reformers themselves. It is worth devoting considerable time and space to a detailed review of the way in which the reformers' discussions on this crucial question developed as it shows Philip in his most eirenic and influential rôle while at the same time struggling to retain fidelity to his conscience and his own gradually developing perception of the truth.

Right from his earliest days in the Evangelical camp Philip had rejected transubstantiation ⁽⁹⁷⁾ which he saw as being based on a misunderstanding of Aristotle. However, at this time, he held a real, physical presence of Christ in the elements. By the time of the Marburg Colloquy (1529) Philip had moved on from his position on a physical presence and saw Luther's insistence on this as a backward step. In 1530 Philip had been influenced by the Patristic evidence of Oecolampadius who had shown to Melanchthon's satisfaction that the ancient Church taught both a mystical and a symbolic doctrine of the presence four centuries before the doctrine of the physical transformation of the elements was expressed. Notwithstanding this change in his own opinion Philip continued to disagree with Zwingli's position on the

ubiquity of Christ by which he argued that the body of Christ was in heaven and therefore could not be in the elements, and Zwingli's view that when Christ said "This is my body" he pointed to himself and, finally, Bucer's opinion that Christ is present in the Supper only to believers. Melanchthon could not tolerate any mere memorial view, as he held it to be too far removed from the scriptures. However, he did come to a mystical view of the Supper by which he held that Christ was present but that man is unable to express or explain the manner of that presence.

Towards the end of 1530 Bucer had proposed a compromise view on the Supper which he submitted to Philip of Hesse and Duke Ernst of Lüneburg. According to this formulation Zwingli and Oecolampadius would agree with Luther that Christ's body and blood were present in the Supper and are offered with the Word to the soul for the strengthening of faith. Philip was sceptical whether the Swiss reformers would really go that far as he remembered the bitterness of the earlier pamphlet war and the perfidy of Bucer in deliberately mistranslating some key words in Luther's writings. He wrote to Bucer expressing his pleasure at his proposal but wondering if Zwingli and Oecolampadius actually taught what Bucer wrote. Here was the stumbling block, Bucer had committed the Zwinglians to more than they were willing to accept.

During the next two years Philip became even more uneasy with the notion of a physical presence of Christ in the Supper. The very argument of the ubiquity of the body of Christ meant that he was everywhere in his Godhead and so how could one talk about his being physically present in the Supper if not physically present everywhere? He fell back on his motif of the eucharist as a mystery analogous to faith. The statement of Christ "This is my body" came to refer to the

spiritual presence of Christ at all times and in all places, not a physical presence and yet not a memorial either.

Both Zwingli and Oecolampadius died in 1531 which left Bucer as the leading Radical in most people's eyes. In 1533 Bucer began to sue for unity and wrote "In preparation for union", which caused Melanchthon to respond fulsomely and speak of his desire for unity and an end to schism. "I desire nothing more than that the monstrous scandal of this schism, which so manifestly hinders the course of the gospel, may be eliminated". (98)

Philip of Hesse arranged for Melanchthon and Bucer to meet at Cassel at Christmastide 1534 to seek a way towards union. Before the meeting took place Melanchthon sought an undertaking from Bucer about the presence of Christ, according to his divinity, in the sacrament. Bucer gave this undertaking. (99) Melanchthon turned to Luther for an "instruction" to take to the meeting for without the founder's consent there could be no union. Luther wrote: "Our doctrine is, that in the bread or with the bread, the body of Christ is really eaten, so that all the motions and actions which are attributed to the bread, are attributed also to the body of Christ, so that the body is truly broken, eaten and torn by the teeth". (100) Again, Luther restated his position: "The flesh is eaten and bitten by the teeth. From this view I cannot deviate even if heaven should fall on me". (101) Melanchthon had moved from this position to the via media of a mystical interpretation but Luther's instruction clearly ruled out any such position and so Melanchthon had to go to Cassel "as the bearer of another's, not his own view". (102)

When Bucer and Melanchthon met at Cassel Luther's instruction was rejected forthwith. Bucer was prepared to hold to the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession but not to accept this carnal view of Luther's. He was prepared to admit that the body and blood of Christ are essentially and truly received in the Supper and that the bread and wine are signs by which the body and blood are given and partaken. He would not accept a natural union but a sacramental one. (103) Finally an agreed statement was agreed by Bucer and Melanchthon: "That the body of Christ is really and truly received, when we receive the sacrament: and bread and wine are signs, signa exhibitiva, which being given and received, the body of Christ is at the same time given and received; and we hold that the bread and wine are together, not by mixing of their substances, but as a sacrament, and are given with the sacrament. As both parties hold that bread and wine remain, they hold that there is a sacramental conjunction". (104) Even though he was not pleased with the idea of a sacramental union, Luther was delighted with the statement and declared that union was virtually accomplished. Melanchthon said: "Could I purchase union with my death, gladly would I give my life". (105)

Bucer went back to his own theologians and managed to unite them behind him so that in July 1535 a joint working party from the two groups met to discuss Bucer's "Report" against the Anabaptists and his "Ten Articles"; they found considerable agreement on these works. The Swiss then united in a confession which seemed so little different from Melanchthon's formula at Cassel that full agreement seemed imminent.

The Swiss were scheduled to meet Luther and Melanchthon at Eisenach on 14 May 1536 formally to debate the eucharist. Luther was too ill to be moved from his house in Wittenberg so the parties assembled there on

21 May 1536. It was agreed that, as the Swiss party was so small, no decision was to be made but a formula submitted to the Swiss churches. When the Swiss had arrived Luther had been suspicious of Bucer due to a recently published preface which Bucer claimed to have written years before. Luther insisted that Bucer and his party renounce their former teaching and accept that, independently of the faith of the recipient, the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the sacrament. Further, Luther required them to own that the body and blood are received by both worthy and unworthy alike. To all this the Swiss agreed with the proviso that they distinguished between the unworthy and the wicked whom they said could not receive the true presence of Christ. After some careful manoeuvring by Philip, Luther agreed to this and drew up an agreed statement on behalf of the Wittenbergers. "We have now heard your answers and confession, viz. that you believe and teach, that in the Lord's Supper the true body and blood of Christ are given and received, and not alone bread and wine: also, that this giving and receiving takes place truly and not just in imagination. Although you take offence in regard to the wicked, yet you confess with St Paul that the unworthy receive the Lord's body, where the institutions and word of the Lord are not perverted, about this we will not contend. Hence, as you are thus minded, we are one, and we acknowledge and receive you as our dear brethren in the Lord". (106)

On 29 May 1536 the Lutherans and Zwinglians came together in the Wittenberg Concord: "Although they deny that transubstantiation occurs, and do not hold that a local inclusion of the bread occurs, or any lasting connection without the use of the sacrament, yet they concede that, by the sacramental union, the bread is the body of Christ, i.e. they hold that when the bread is held out the body of Christ is at the

same time present and truly tendered. For, apart from use, when it is laid by in the pyx or displaced in processions, as occurs among the papists, they hold that the body of Christ is not present".⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ This Concord was sent to preachers of both parties and was signed by twenty-one theologians but this obscured its shallow nature. Melanchthon knew that deep divisions existed within each party as well as between them, which carefully chosen words could not heal. The Concord was rejected by the Swiss theologians who felt that Bucer had given too much ground and so the first real hope of a united Protestantism died at birth.

In the interim between the first meeting with Bucer in Cassel and the Wittenberg Concord, Melanchthon had completed and published the 1535 version of the Loci. In this he expressed his view of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper: "As I have said before, the word "sacrament" means an external sign which God has joined to his promise, through which he offers grace. The external sign (bread) is a sacrament. One should understand and take it for an eternal divine pledge and seal of the whole gospel....When we believe the divine promise that we are offered consolation and the forgiveness of our sins through Christ, this external sign is to be received. And the external sign God places before our bodily eyes, and lets us eat, drink and partake, so that we may be awakened in faith and become the more certain and strong in the knowledge of Christ. For when Christ gives us his body, he takes us as members of himself, and shows very comfortably that grace and treasure are for us....When one offers in the Supper bread and wine there is truly offered to us the body and blood of Christ, and Christ is truly there, and is powerful in us, as Hilarius says: This eating and drinking makes it that Christ is

in us and we in him. And it is truly a wonderfully dear great pledge of the highest divine love towards us and the highest mercy, that the Lord in the Supper shows that he truly gives himself to us, that he truly gives us to enjoy his body and blood, that he makes us members of himself, upon which we know that he loves, takes us up, protects and upholds us". (108)

In early 1537 Melanchthon was asked by Jacob Schenk, a Freiburg preacher, if it was ever possible to administer communion under one kind alone. Philip replied that if a devout Catholic had not been instructed and could not understand the underlying principles of the Evangelical mass then it would be permissible to use just the bread for communion. Schenk desired to see Melanchthon exposed as a Crypto-Catholic and so sent the reply to the Elector who handed it to Luther and Bugenhagen. Luther's response was that he would speak to Philip and pray for him. The various moves which unsettled Melanchthon's place within the Wittenberg school continued for the next few years. Luther was distressed and distrustful at the way that Philip's mind on the eucharist was developing. It did not take very much to have some of their pupils accuse Melanchthon of departing from the true Evangelical faith but Luther held fire for a few more years.

Melanchthon met John Calvin for the first time in February 1539 at a colloquy in Frankfurt. They only had time for informal discussions but laid the foundation of a life-long friendship based on a search for clarity of thought and expression after the influence of Erasmus. During the two years between their first meeting and the Diet of Regensburg (1541) the two men met often and Calvin was partially

responsible for helping Melanchthon to change his view on the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper. This can be seen by a comparison of Article X of the Augsburg Confession of 1530 and the same article in the Variata of 1540. (109) In 1530 Philip had said: "Of the Supper of the Lord, they teach that the body and blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord; and they disapprove of those who teach otherwise". (110) In 1540 he wrote: "Of the Supper of the Lord, they teach that with the bread and with the wine the body and blood of Christ are truly tendered to those who eat in the Lord's Supper". (111) Thus, Philip has moved from a "real physical presence" of Christ to a "real spiritual presence" which may well have been intended to help unite various groups within Protestantism. While he was not denying Luther's position in his 1540 formula he was allowing room for a spiritual interpretation which Calvin and other Radicals could accept.

In 1543 a dispute arose in Eisleben over what to do with the bread and wine left over from the Supper. This raised the question of how long the presence of Christ remained. When Luther was asked to give guidance on this question he hesitated. He wanted to maintain a lasting physical presence of Christ in the elements, he couldn't believe that they reverted to being ordinary bread and wine after the Supper, but he didn't want to do anything to suggest transubstantiation as he knew that this would lead to adoration of the elements. His rather obscure answer was that they should be treated "sacramentally". Melanchthon's reply was fuller and displayed his spiritual view: "God is not bound to bread and wine apart from the purpose for which the communion was instituted. It would be wrong to portray the union in a manner which at the words of consecrating would make Christ's body

so united with bread as to be perpetually there. Only while the visible signs are being received is Christ present and effective". (112)

Trusting in the recess of the Council of Regensburg (1541), Hermann von Wied, Archbishop of Cologne, summoned Melanchthon and Bucer to his diocese in 1543 to advise him on bringing in the reformed doctrines. The conditions which Melanchthon found there reminded him of the Saxon visitation of 1528. Together with Bucer he wrote the book "Hermann's Consultation" (The Cologne Reformation). The text had largely been prepared by Bucer before Philip's arrival but the latter added several sections and reworked the whole thing in consultation with Bucer and the Archbishop. When it came to the article on the Eucharist Bucer had said that with the bread and wine in the Supper the body and blood of Christ were offered. Philip saw no reason to change this so it appeared in the final work. When the Archbishop presented this reform to his territorial diet the clergy rose in revolt and after three years of open dispute the Archbishop was deposed on 16 April 1546.

When Hermann's Consultation was printed it was quickly noticed by the strict Lutherans that the sacrament had been reduced to a work of faith. Amsdorf immediately drew Luther's attention to it and the leader showed such blazing anger that Philip felt that he may have to leave Wittenberg over the question. Luther expressed his anger by saying: "...everything is too long, a great babbling; I surely smell that chatterbox Bucer in it". (113)

Philip was unhappy that a new eucharistic controversy threatened in the unstable political climate but Luther and Calvin were unmoving

in their opposition. In October 1544 Luther wrote his "Brief Confession on the Holy Sacrament against the fanatics". Melanchthon had expected Luther to openly attack him after the episode of the Cologne Reformation but Luther was milder than expected and did not mention Melanchthon or Bucer by name. However, he described all who held a different position than his own as "bedevilled". Calvin responded to this but failed to persuade Melanchthon to "nail his colours to the mast" and openly support him.

The whole long saga of debates over the eucharist ultimately bore no tangible fruit in terms of the unity of Evangelical Christianity. It does show the lengths to which Philip was prepared to go to find a suitable solution and, perhaps even more vividly, it shows not a weak pliable man who could be bent by every new turn of the tide but a strong, vigorous defendant of truth as it was revealed to him by his intellect and conscience even when this meant risking his position and friends.

Chapter Three. The Adiaphora Controversy

The last ten years of Melanchthon's life were blighted by disputes within Lutheranism. These were fundamentally questions of authority and power-struggles after the death of Luther. During the Reformer's lifetime his word on any question was regarded as final and authoritative but since his death no-one possessed the same degree of authority. Although Melanchthon was still regarded as a first-rate reformer who must be consulted on major questions his life was overshadowed by the charges of over-compliance during the years of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims. The strict Lutherans regarded his teaching on justification and the eucharist as suspect, while John Calvin, mistaking a general personal friendliness for total theological agreement, charged Melanchthon with weakness for failing to state openly and plainly his view of the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper. For these reasons the comprehensive review of Evangelical doctrine which emerged as the Saxon Confession (1551) did not receive the popular acclaim which was its due. In many ways Philip opened himself to these charges by his moderate and eirenic approach to those troubled years but he could justify his position by claiming that he had stood firm on the central Evangelical doctrines of justification, the Lord's Supper and ecclesiology. The fact that many of his opponents owed their training in theology to Melanchthon's lectures hurt him deeply and he longed for release from theological controversy. The fact that he refused all invitations to work in more placid surroundings and persevered in Wittenberg demonstrates his dogged dedication to the reform. In 1533 he had seen to it that all preachers and candidates for teaching positions in Wittenberg were tested and bound by oath to uphold the true faith, now his influence

in this matter spread and he drew up a set of articles for the examination of ordinands for use in Mecklenburg which found wide usage throughout Evangelical Churches.

One of his chief opponents in the Adiaphora Controversy was Matthew Vlacich (Flacius) of Illyria, who had been a pupil of his. At the time of the Interim negotiations Flacius left Wittenberg for Mugeleburg where he carried on a vitriolic war of words with his former master. He circulated numerous pamphlets, over ninety in one year alone, against Melanchthon's teaching. Eventually Melanchthon could no longer ignore these aspersions but no matter how moderately he replied it only fuelled the dispute. Flacius' central argument was that nothing can be regarded as adiaphora which was required by the law, only matters of individual free choice could be so regarded.

Soon the scope of adiaphora widened until it encompassed not only semantic expression but also points of theology. The main theological divergence took place under the leadership of Andrew Osiander who had been driven into exile by the Leipzig Interim. Under the patronage of Duke Albert of Prussia, Osiander became the first professor of theology at Königsberg. In his inaugural address he maintained that we are justified, not by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, but by union with Christ, by the indwelling of Christ. Christ, said Osiander, is our mediator only according to his divine nature, not according to his human nature. When his colleagues challenged this interpretation Osiander appealed to Melanchthon but when the latter replied that this was a mere war of words Osiander turned against him and said that Melanchthon and his followers were ministers of Satan. Osiander was a mystic and as such the historic action of the Saviour receded

into the background and contact with the divine nature was the hallmark of righteousness. To clear the air, Melanchthon suggested a private meeting with Osiander but when this failed to materialise he decided to write a "Reply to the Book of the Revd. Andrew Osiander". In this work he restated the Evangelical doctrine that the ground of redemption is the whole Christ by faith in whom man receives forgiveness. Faith in forgiveness must first be present and only then can the indwelling Christ achieve man's sanctification. Osiander's tone became more vehement and he accused Melanchthon of deserting Luther's doctrine and of not understanding what justification was about.

In 1551 Duke Albert attempted to settle the dispute by sending a copy of Osiander's writings to all the states of the Augsburg Confession. Elector Maurice required an opinion from Melanchthon on behalf of the Wittenbergers, in which he wrote: "We must look upon Jesus Christ, God and man, as our mediator, we must cast ourselves on his wounds and must find sure consolation in the fact that we have forgiveness of sins and are heard on account of this mediator... That faith rests on the Lord Jesus, God and man, and on his merits and intercession". (114) A futile discussion following the consultation was held in Frankfurt.

Osiander now attacked Melanchthon in the coarsest manner and wrote two scandalous books: "The bleeding of Philip" and "The refutations of the weak and worthless answer of Philip Melanchthon". In order to avoid scandalising the common people Philip wrote a Latin reply to Osiander in January 1553 which was not answered in print before the death of Osiander on 17 October 1553. Even after his death Duke Albert sought to vindicate his professor whose following had

spread into Pomerania and Nuremberg. Eventually a conference was called in Naumberg which banned Osiander's writings from the Church. Melanchthon was asked to write the judgement in which he said that some of Osiander's work was obscure, while most of it was incorrect. A few of Osiander's followers continued to fight on in Prussia which caused Duke Albert to send for Melanchthon and Brentz in 1556 to work out a peaceful solution. In the end the Königsbergers renounced Osiander's teaching and pledged themselves to the Confession and the Loci.

The counterpart of Osiander's mistaken Christology came from Francis Stancar, an Italian ex-priest who had been converted to the Reformation. He announced that reconciliation is effected alone by the sufferings which Christ bore in his human nature and so Christ can be said to be the Saviour only in his human nature. Stancar was attacked first by Andrew Musculus who was later supported by Melanchthon. Stancar turned on Melanchthon and accused him of three hundred errors. In reply Philip wrote: "Reply to the contentions of Stancar" in June 1553. Here he stated the doctrine of the Church to be "That God was born of a virgin, suffered, died and rose again. The divine nature did not suffer, die and rise again because the person is considered in the concrete". (115)

The violence and fanaticism of the attacks on Melanchthon grew during these years. He was openly accused of betraying Lutheran doctrine and trying to return to Roman theology instead, hence he was called a Crypto-Catholic as later he was to be dubbed a Crypto-Calvinist. One such attack blew up over the teaching of George Major. When Major had been a pupil of Melanchthon's in the 1530's Melanchthon had

attached great importance to the activity of faith and had occasionally spoken of faith being verified by the presence of good works which had led him into dispute. Now, twenty years later, when Major developed his thesis that no-one could be saved without true repentance both he and Melanchthon came under attack. The whole of Northern Germany rose against Major who was deprived of his superintendency and had to fly to Wittenberg for refuge. The followers of Flacius joined their leader in charging Melanchthon with weakening Lutheran doctrine, mixing predestination with justification, defending "stoic necessity" and so on. Melanchthon was provoked into a sharply worded reply.

Flacius proposed a conciliatory meeting with Melanchthon in Coswig which lay between Wittenberg and Magdeberg but this was a shallow ruse to humiliate Melanchthon by calling him to give an account before Flacius as his judge. When Melanchthon heard of the plan to make him confess certain articles as false doctrines he refused to attend, whereupon Flacius called for a public recantation. The gulf between the two men grew when Flacius became professor in Jena. Melanchthon saw this as the growing sophistry of the age and was deeply hurt by the thought of the divisions in the Church which had thus been caused. He was particularly concerned that the Flacians seemed to prefer an approach of anathematizing contrary opinions rather than seeking to find the truthful middle way as had been Melanchthon's method.

Looking over the development of Melanchthon's thought on justification through the editions of the Loci it is possible to see how he had changed from his early, strictly Lutheran, approach. By the end of his life he could not allow for a secret will in God which damns some and saves others, so he had moved away from a strict interpretation of predestination.

At the same time he could not allow the Catholic doctrine of man meriting his own salvation. He saw faith as the free gift from God which could not be demanded by man and could not be forced on man were he not freely willing to receive it. He reached the formulation at the end of his life that man, by the grace of God working in him, can predispose himself to receive the gift of faith which will justify him. (116)

The remaining years of Melanchthon's life were spent in the shade of the Flacians. He knew that a general synod of the Evangelical Church was the only way to resolve these differences but the mood of the times was against it. The princes, at Melanchthon's suggestion, united behind the Frankfurt Recess which upheld Melanchthon's position on Osiander, good works, the Lord's Supper and the Adiaphora. As expected the Flacians objected and published their "Weimar Confutation" to which Melanchthon wrote a refutation which he decided not to publish in an attempt to halt the dispute.

There was a crisis of authority within Protestantism now that Luther was dead. While he had been alive his word had been accepted as final on any question. Although Melanchthon was often called in to speak authoritatively on disputed questions he never claimed absolute authority and declared that he could err. Some of the princes believed that theological debates should be settled by synods but Melanchthon lost confidence in this means as time went on. He felt that synods would serve to multiply the differences still further. He preferred to replace the synod at the summit of Church authority with an official body of doctrine and a standing committee along the lines of a consistory. Synods should meet only seldomly on great issues and local decisions

should be taken at territorial diets. In this Philip did not carry the majority of the princes with him, they still preferred the idea of regular synods.

To survey and conclude the Adiaphora Controversy we may join C.L. Manschreck and say: "Luther, whose temperament was so different from that of Melanchthon, might have acted differently in the Interims, but in theory at least he would have acted as did Melanchthon. In conclusion these points should be noted. Melanchthon was no innovator in the realm of adiaphora, for a striking similarity exists between what transpired in 1548 and what he and Luther said and did earlier. Nor did Melanchthon falsely interpret Luther; his conduct in the adiaphoristic contention represents a relatively true interpretation and application of Luther's thought on non-essentials - especially when we consider the attitude of both towards civil powers. Luther and Melanchthon insisted on religious liberty in justification, not on civil liberty". (117)

Part V

Gaspar Contarini: 16th Century Catholic Conciliator

Philip Melanchthon was not the only person of a conciliatory temperament on the 16th century religious scene. It has already been noted that Martin Bucer was also convinced that there could be agreement on many questions. Bucer and Melanchthon made up the Protestant delegation at the last Diet which made any real attempt to resolve the theological differences between Rome and the Reform. This was the Diet of Regensburg (Ratisbon) 1541. The Catholic party at the Diet was headed by John Eck but it included two of the most eirenic among Catholic theologians, Johann Gropper and Julius von Pflug. Although these two played a substantial part in the discussions Regensburg was made singular by being the only such Diet to be favoured by a Papal Legate and that man, on this occasion, was Cardinal Gaspar Contarini.

In order to illustrate our thesis that there were men of conciliatory good will on the scene during the Reformation we will take a brief look at the Diet of Regensburg through an analysis of the rôle of Legate Contarini. The compass of the present work prohibits any detailed investigation of all the conciliatory characters and the dearth of source material in English limits the depth to which our analysis of the character and theology of Contarini can be taken. Nevertheless it may be instructive to examine something of the conciliatory contribution of Contarini as a counterpoint to the much more detailed work on Melanchthon.

Gaspar Contarini was born in 1483 to one of the Patrician families of Venice. He was educated at the University of Padua where he was taken with the new learning of Erasmian humanism. He read widely in the classics especially Homer, Virgil, Horace and Cicero. Then began a study of the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Thomas Aquinas. To round off his learning he was also deeply read in the Patristics especially Augustine, Basil, Chrysostom, Nazianzus. He established for himself a reputation as a scholar with such a wide range of knowledge that in a lesser man it would betoken very little depth. All his later writings were truly humanist in character, they appealed to reason. He was a natural magnet for aspiring humanists of the day, a "reasonable man" whose writings were never coloured by bitterness of polemic.

Contarini's early career was as a diplomat. He served as Venetian Ambassador at the court of Charles V and as such was present at the Diet of Worms (1521). He served also in England, Spain and at the Papal Court. Contarini's reputation as a theologian grew after he published a treatise defending the immortality of the soul in 1516. In 1530 he published a book against some of the errors that he saw in Luther's arguments. ⁽¹¹⁸⁾ His reputation and popularity at the Papal Court led him, while still a layman, to be created a Cardinal by Pope Paul III in 1535. In 1536 he was put on a commission to prepare for the Council of Trent and it was here that he built a reputation as a reformer. Over the next five years he established himself as one of the leading Catholic figures pressing for reforms in the Church. During 1536 to 1537 he issued his "Consilium de emendanda ecclesia" which was regarded in Italy as a radical call to reform. He was ordained Bishop of Belluno in 1536.

By the time of the colloquies which led up to Regensburg Contarini was the best informed Papal diplomat on the Evangelical question. He was appointed to the German Legation in May 1540 from which date he expended much time reading all the official despatches to the curia which concerned Germany. He had also a wide circle of correspondents among German Catholics. It was as a diplomat that Contarini achieved real importance and fame. His humanist and theological training served to improve his performance in this, his central profession. Ultimately he was the servant of the Pope and curia and in no way a free agent. This must be underlined as it colours all his encounters. He was a born optimist and saw his appointment to Germany as a God-given opportunity to create a bridge between Catholic and Protestant camps. His knowledge of Lutheran thinking was more than sketchy but he perhaps convinced himself that he was better informed than he really was. As a Catholic reformer Contarini hoped to show the Reformers that renewal was already afoot in the Catholic Church which they could aid and advance if they returned and ceased to tear the Church asunder. Many of the theological and practical reforms which he sought were sufficiently similar to the Reformers' aims that, as a man, he appealed to them but he was also the servant of a corrupt power as far as the Evangelicals were concerned and so this coloured their judgement.

The years leading up to Regensburg were intensely political. Rome was fighting not only for theological purity but also for her own authority throughout Europe. England had already broken with the authority of the Pope, Germany might well follow suit. There was a rumour, circulated by the Bishop of Trent, that the Evangelicals were

willing to make an offer to the Emperor to become spiritual and temporal head of Germany after the English model. (119) As a Papal diplomat Contarini wrote to Cardinal Pole expressing his concern that unless measure were taken to prevent private meetings between the German Princes and the Evangelicals which made no mention of the Pope or his authority then not only would the schism deepen but the global authority of the Pope would be shattered. (120)

By the time of the Colloquy of Speyer (planned for 1540 but transferred to Hagenau) there was a strong suspicion that the Emperor would yield to the nationalistic tendencies of the Germans. Both German Catholics and Protestants saw the Pope as an alien power and were prepared to see some resolution of German ecclesiastical questions on a purely national basis, perhaps by a National Council. Contarini and Pole were the strong contenders to go to the Colloquy of Speyer and try to rally the Catholic Princes under the authority of the Pope. It was felt that only these two men had the necessary personal authority and the ear of Pope Paul III. In spite of pressure from the Emperor to send a Legate, and Contarini would have suited Charles V well, the curia were not happy about sending anyone with a Legate's powers, certainly not if this included plenary powers to settle the dispute, and so the Nuncio Morone was sent instead. This gave Rome some distance from the discussions in case they went wrong. A Legate could always be sent later. The official explanation for not sending Contarini was that as Venice and Turkey had signed a treaty the prominent Venetian would not be welcome although the Emperor had expressed his willingness to receive him as legate.

Not only were the German Catholic moderates like Johann von

Metzenhausen, Archbishop of Trier, looking to settle the religious affairs of Germany at home rather than in Rome, the theological adviser of Philip of Hesse, the Reformer Martin Bucer, was so minded too. Bucer was the most nationalistic of all the Reformers. As Matheson puts it: "For him the cause of God's kingdom and the interests of the German vatterland were most intimately related to one another". (121) Bucer saw the political reality of the Schmalkaldic League as a figure of the body of Christ on earth.

When the Colloquy of Hagenau began in June 1540 the Protestant Princes John Frederick of Saxony and Philip of Hesse were not present. The Imperial proposition was most eirenic and caused Nuncio Morone much anguish as it failed to make any mention of the Papacy and sought religious toleration to support Charles' political needs. The Emperor was embroiled in a war against the Turks which meant that, not only could he not bring the Evangelicals to heel by force, but he was actually desperately in need of their military power to defeat the common enemy. Within this political framework Charles was prepared to seek a compromise. In the curia this was not appreciated. As far as Rome was concerned the Emperor was bound by duty and treaty to return Germany to the old religion and no thought of religious compromise or of the Emperor's inability to solve the matter by force was permitted. The Colloquy made no progress but the Emperor was determined to press on and so called another for Worms for the autumn of 1540 and a full Diet at Regensburg in 1541.

The Pope was running a terrible risk in pursuing his policy of ignoring the events in Germany. By so doing he risked losing the support of the Emperor who was his only friend. It would be all too easy for the Emperor to reach an accommodation with the Protestants and oppose

the Pope in Germany at least. The Pope held the Colloquy at Worms in disdain. He refused to allow Contarini to attend but reluctantly agreed that Thomas Campeggio (brother of the late Lorenzo) should attend.

The Colloquy of Worms began on 25 November 1540. Morone and Campeggio were the Papal representatives and quickly summed up the situation. If things came to a vote the Papal party were bound to be defeated so they set about constructing delaying tactics to ensure that no decisions were arrived at. They applied pressure to the Imperial Chancellor, Granvella, to change the rules for procedure so that only one collocator from each side could take part. This meant that the leading disputants Eck and Melanchthon were chosen thus ruling out more pliable individuals. Melanchthon was under instructions to stand by the Augsburg Confession and Eck was at his belligerent best defending Catholic tradition so there was little hope of progress. The two were bound to rehearse the arguments which they had never succeeded in solving on countless occasions in the past. Progress was balked. No vote was taken. The Roman diplomats had won that round.

During the Colloquy of Worms Granvella attempted a highly delicate ^{Oeu} maneuvre. He obtained the service of two of Philip of Hesse's leading theologians, Bucer and Capito, and persuaded them to agree to secret meetings with eirenic Catholic theologians to draw up an agreed statement to be placed before the Diet of Regensburg. The Catholic parties were to be Gropper and Gerhard Veltwyck, who was answerable directly to Granvella. Negotiations opened on 14 December 1540. They were greatly aided by Philip of Hesse's decision ten days later to throw in his lot

with the Emperor. He felt that he had been badly supported by the Evangelicals over the affair of his bigamous marriage. He informed Bucer ⁽¹²²⁾ of his decision to placate the Emperor and resign the military leadership of the Schmalkaldic League on Christmas Eve.

As he was technically liable to the death penalty for bigamy Granvella regarded him as a great catch as he could be pressurised into giving support. With the Langrave's backing to a more flexible approach the secret meetings made good progress and eventually the Regensburg Book was produced. The secret was remarkably well kept as, apart from Granvella and the authors, only Philip of Hesse and the Elector of Brandenburg knew of its existence before the diet.

On 8 January 1541 the Pope agreed to send Contarini as Papal Legate to the Diet of Regensburg. His departure from Rome on 15 January 1541 was met with enthusiastic speculation on all sides; now at last an end to the schism was in sight! Matheson gives two warnings about over-enthusiasm for Contarini's task of conciliation. First, Contarini's powers as Legate were distinctly limited. His brief was to offer advice to participants and report proceedings to Rome. He was forbidden to enter into negotiations but could encourage or reproach as necessary. Secondly, although Contarini was a man of great gifts, his contemporaries tended to eulogise him and over-estimate his abilities. He was a man carrying an unbearable burden of expectation.

Contarini himself began his journey to Regensburg with a mixture of emotions. He was an experienced diplomat and knew how to manipulate people towards his own ends. He was a zealous man who performed his duties with vigour and scrupulous attention. Although his activities were circumscribed by his brief he was clear in his own mind that he

was going to bring about a major reconciliation within the Church. Ever the optimist, Contarini believed that he not only understood but shared the central belief of the Reform; justification by faith. He held that justification was fundamental to the Christian religion not just to Protestantism. "Il fundamento dello aedificio de Lutherani e verissimo, ne per alcun modo devemo dirli contra, ma accetarlo come vero et catholico, immo come fundamento della religione christiane".⁽¹²³⁾ Put into its simplest form, Contarini thought that the Evangelical religion was based on a false understanding of Catholicism. Once he had rectified this reunion was a matter of course.

To be fair to him, Contarini's brand of Catholicism was not that which was common in the curia in his day nor was it of kindred spirit with the decrees of the Council of Trent. His desire was to reform the Catholic Church, to Evangelise it, if you like. Thus he hoped to win the Reformers to a new Evangelical Catholicism rather than back to the unreformed Church. In order to achieve this goal it was necessary that Contarini should have direct access to the Evangelical scholars but the curia and his official instruction forbade such close encounters. It was clear that the Legate and his masters had quite different views of the situation.

The curia feared that, driven by political necessity, the Emperor would be over-conciliatory at Regensburg. They feared that he would concede not only theological points like clerical marriage and the cup for the laity but also decide in favour of the Reformers on various legal wrangles concerned with Church property and income. As far as the curia were concerned there was very little hope of any theological agreement with the Evangelicals. Contarini's role was to put a brake

on the Emperor, not allow him to concede too much and ensure that the dignity and authority of the Papal office was maintained. No decisions effecting the Church could be made at Regensburg. The Emperor could not settle theological questions. Everything had to be reserved for the decision of the Pope and curia.

Contarini arrived in Regensburg on 11 March 1541 and was joined by Morone who had been appointed Nuncio in place of the eirenic Poggio. Morone was to be the strong man behind Contarini's placatory approach.

The Imperial party, led by Chancellor Granvella, were already in residence. Granvella was a politician not a theologian. For him religion had to be prepared to make concessions for political necessity. His main aim was to restore order to the Empire so that it could act as a concerted power to resist its enemies. To this end all else must be regarded as subordinate. Such was the tenor of Granvella's initial greeting to the Legate. He appears also to have believed that several Evangelical theologians, among them Bucer and Melanchthon, were waivering in their committment to the Reform. He thought that they could be bribed into returning to the Catholic Church.

During the month before the Diet began Contarini had meetings with all the interested parties on the Catholic side. In reply to Granvella's desire to see religion give way to political necessity the diplomat replied that the religious questions were too crucial to be glided over. The anti-Imperial German Catholic party led by the Dukes of Bavaria, the Duke of Brunswick and the Archbishop of Mainz asked Contarini to use his influence to scuttle the diet by insisting that the Protestants return to the Augsburg Recess as an opening gambit in the discussions.

This would end all negotiations and demolish the Emperor's plan to reinforce his Empire with German Protestant money and manpower. In reply Contarini argued in a political way that if the diet were doomed to failure anyway, as the German Catholics believed, it would be better for it to stumble as a result of Evangelical protestations rather than scuttle it at the outset by Catholic intransigence. These were the finest hours of the diplomatic part of Contarini's mission. By well-chosen arguments he managed to manipulate all parties on his side to favour his own position.

The first religious battle was over the authority of the Papacy in religious matters. When the Imperial proposition was shown to Contarini it contained no mention of any submission of religious questions to the decision of the Pope. The outcome of the theological discussions were to be submitted to the Emperor and the Estates only. Contarini complained bitterly to the Imperial Council that religious questions were the responsibility of the religious powers, i.e. the Pope and his representatives, but the Council held firm to their decision on the grounds that the Evangelicals could not accept the impartiality of the Pope as he had already condemned them. Eventually Contarini and Morone appealed to the Emperor directly and succeeded in obtaining an order to have the proposition changed at the last moment. Again this was a political battle in essence as it defended the authority of the Pope but it had strong theological foundations as it halted the trend towards nationalism and the spiritual/temporal duality of Imperial power.

When the Diet was formally opened on 5 April 1541 a Catholic mass was celebrated which was attended not only by the Catholic parties

but also by Contarini and the Emperor. There is no suggestion here that the Diet was to be a truly humanist colloquy where good-natured men attended with open minds to hear the arguments of others. There was no pretence to religious neutrality at the Diet. It was to be a meeting of the establishment with an equally entrenched breakaway group. The ultimate goal was equally clear. The theologians were to meet in the first part and hopefully reach a concord on the basis of which, in the second part, the political leaders could agree a workable arrangement whereby unity would be restored to the Empire so that a common front could be mounted against the Turks.

The Diet was not really underway by Holy Week but its proceedings were formally suspended for the religious observances. The Emperor celebrated with the Catholics. Contarini took part but he was forbidden by the Emperor to give the Papal blessing and indulgence which might antagonise the Evangelicals. For the Protestants' part they were given permission to assemble for services in the house of Philip of Hesse. Bucer was formally licenced by the Emperor to conduct their services. This gave grounds for some hope as they were theoretically "heretical" and yet licenced by a Catholic Emperor in the midst of an Imperial Diet complete with Papal Legate. This raised the hope for some Protestants of a degree of tolerance.

When the proceedings resumed after Easter the Emperor came under pressure to announce the collocutors. Neither side would have accepted teams which did not include the front line disputants present namely Eck and Melanchthon, but the Emperor hoped to moderate Eck's trenchant approach by appointing the moderate Catholics Gropper and Pflug. For the Evangelicals the two advisers of Philip of Hesse,

Bucer and Pistorius, were appointed. In this way the secret authors of the Regensburg Book were well placed to influence both sides in its favour. The joint presidency of the colloquy was to be taken by Imperial Chancellor Granvella and the Protestant Elector Count Frederick of the Palatinate. There was to be no official rôle for Contarini.

As Contarini had no direct access to discussions he arranged with Granvella that Eck, Gropper and Pflug should report to him every night on the day's proceedings. Often Granvella accompanied them to share in the briefing. By this arrangement Contarini was able to work for the furtherance of both his official and unofficial ends. He could ensure that there was no sell-out of Papal authority and at the same time support the eirenic Gropper and Pflug, fellow humanists, against the more ~~dire~~ scholasticism of Eck. In this way he had an ideal opportunity to guide the proceedings positively towards an acceptable settlement. He was also able to monitor Granvella's political pressure on the collocutors. As the attitude of the collocutors was determined on almost a daily basis by these briefings a great deal of importance must be given to the underlying eirenical and ecumenical spirit of Contarini.

On 23 April 1541 Contarini was shown the Regensburg Book under conditions of absolute secrecy which included withholding the identity of the authors. For two days he worked through it with Morone and Gropper; the latter betraying his authorship by a close knowledge of the text. The ~~outcome~~ was a ~~list~~ of twenty changes which Contarini proposed, making sure that they were understood to emanate from his personal opinion rather than officially from the Legate. These included

an insistence on the term transubstantiation which was omitted from the original. Gropper agreed to all the changes.

The Catholic collocutors were now allowed to study the book, a distinct advantage over the Evangelicals. Eck attacked it bitterly, for example over the reference to Christ as the "causa subefficiens" and God as the "causa efficiens" of our salvation which he took to indicate an undercurrent of Arianism. Contarini was able, on the level of scholarship, to show Eck the ample precedent of referring to Christ's humanity in this way. Eck acquiesced and became much more reasonable. So much so that Melanchthon noted the change. (124)

Morone commented on the "goodness, sagacity and learning of the Legate and the total dependence of the three Catholics on Contarini". (125)

The question of justification was the first major doctrine to be considered by the Diet. Contarini had given this question more thought and study than any other as he believed that it was central not only to the Evangelical interpretation of Christianity as Luther taught but, to the whole of the Christian religion. This was Contarini's strong suit. He believed that he had worked out a middle way on the question of justification to which both Catholics and Protestants of goodwill could agree. The debate began on 25 April 1541 and lasted a total of four days. Both the leading disputants agreed that the long-winded article in the Regensburg Book should be set aside and freer discussion take place. Faced with such a concerted opinion from the collocutors Granvella had no choice but to agree to the change in procedure. Both sides then put forward their own drafts on the question to be considered and both were rejected. A third draft, put forward by Contarini, was also rejected. Then the collocutors went back to the Catholic draft and reworked it in search of mutual agreement. The Evangelicals were

not hopeful for a settlement but persevered in the hope that the prize, if achieved, would be worth the effort. There was a certain division among the Catholic collocutors as Gropper and Pflug were prepared to be much more flexible than was Eck. The nightly discussions with the Legate played a signal rôle and Contarini was attributed with the credit for leading Eck and the others towards the final agreement. Eventually the draft had been so adapted by the discussions that the Evangelicals could find nothing in it contrary to the Augsburg Confession and thus it was sealed. John Calvin wrote to Farel in Geneva and commented on the amount that the Catholics had conceded. (102)

Contarini was working on his own treatise on justification at this time, his *Epistola de Justificatione*, which was completed on 25 May 1541. The two main points of the agreed article were the entirely gratuitous nature of justification and the impossibility of separating faith and love. (126)

The euphoria over agreement on justification was followed on 3 May 1541 by discussions on the nature of the Church. The vague wording of the Regensburg Book had to be cut through by the collocutors as they began considering the infallible authority of orthodox councils. Melanchthon saw this as the fundamental stand to be taken by the Evangelicals. For him there was a polarity between the divine will as shown in scripture and all human tradition including councils. To deny this would undermine the Evangelical faith. In the Evangelical redraft on the rôle of the Church in interpreting scripture it was agreed that the whole Church had the responsibility and authority to interpret the teaching of the scriptures but this authority lay with the whole Church and not just with certain office-holders such

as bishops. All men of faith had to reflect on the scriptures and then agree on their interpretation of it. Some early councils, it was agreed, had correctly interpreted scripture but others had erred, therefore there could be no claim to infallibility for councils per se. The depth of understanding of the Protestant position which had served Contarini so well on the question of justification was less obvious now, he seemed not to grasp the fundamental nature of the impasse which the collocutors had reached. Eventually, for the sake of avoiding a breakdown in negotiations, Granvella agreed to postpone any final agreement on this question until the end of the colloquy.

There were varying opinions among Catholic theologians at this time. Some held that the authority of a Pope was above that of a council while others held that the council carried the greater, and infallible, weight. Contarini himself seems to have been undecided. He preferred to remain agnostic about the precise details of ultimate authority. For this reason he did not make a major personal intervention as he had done over justification and so the seeds of his imminent rebuke from Rome were sown. He had failed to defend his pontifical master's position and for a Legate that was unpardonable.

On 5 May 1541 the final debate of the colloquy, on the sacraments, was opened. The Evangelicals seemed to have made a conscious decision to concentrate their fire-power on certain key doctrines and so to let lesser controverted questions slip by. Agreement was reached on the sacraments in general, baptism, confirmation and ordination but the real stumbling block came over the question of the eucharist.

The debate on the eucharist lasted for a total of nine days. The political will and indeed command to reach an agreement was as strong as ever. The Emperor was insistent and Granvella was by turns pleading and threatening but the breakdown was ultimately theological. From the standpoint of the present work it is important to note that the archconciliators, Melanchthon and Contarini, proved utterly intransigent on this point showing that ultimately they were men of conscience and theological integrity.

The touchstone of the debate was the question of transubstantiation. Contarini himself had insisted on this being written into the Regensburg Book. Before his amendment it read that after the consecration the body and blood of Christ were truly and substantially (vere et substantialiter) present. In a sense, Contarini, the humanist, was introducing a stumbling block of purely scholastic interest. It added nothing to the meaning per se but tied down the understanding of that reality to a particular philosophical concept. However, the Catholic interpretation had to allow for reservation and adoration of the host and these practices were totally unacceptable to the Evangelicals. In Contarini's judgement only with the technical term "transubstantiation" included in the article could it stand any chance of being accepted by the wider Catholic theologians. There has been much debate as to how exactly Contarini interpreted the article. Matheson brings forward many disparate bits of information ⁽¹²⁷⁾ which led him to think that what was being defended was (a) a real presence and (b) a spiritual or mystical change in the character of the elements by which the bread remained but became "spiritual bread". This, he argues, would fit in with Contarini's Patristic theology and that of the liberal reformers. However, the wording had to be quite clear for the sake of

the curia and so such speculation is not relevant to our present examination.

Melanchthon came under considerable political pressure from Granvella at this impasse which amounted to threats of incurring Imperial displeasure. Melanchthon responded by calling a meeting of the Evangelical Estates on 10 May 1541 where he presented the reasons why the collocutors could not accept the article on the eucharist. This meeting was a breach of the oath of secrecy which all the participants had sworn and accordingly incurred Granvella's fury. Melanchthon replied that he was merely using the politicians' tools to defend himself against the Chancellor's threats.

Contarini was inexperienced in the art of barter which was the very stuff of colloquies. He now saw the ground of true faith slipping out from under his feet. Eck had left Regensburg due to ill health and Pistorius had withdrawn from discussions on the grounds of parity. Gropper and Bucer, as the authors of the evasive language of the Regensburg Book were prepared to hide behind the ambiguity, while Pflug was willing to go along with his senior to maintain the momentum of discussion. It seems likely that the original formula of words was not offensive to these humanists anyway as they lacked the political insight of the Legate. This left Melanchthon and Contarini as the bastions of truth as seen by their respective traditions and they refused to attempt to buy peace at the expense of truth. In spite of pressure from politicians and his own collocutors Contarini knew that Rome would never accept such an obscuration of the truth and, if he accepted it, would brand him and all concerned as heretics. Therefore there was no long term gain to be achieved by mental gymnastics. The only option

open to him was to stand firm and accept the demise of the whole colloquy.

The end came on 13 May 1541 when the theologians acknowledged the total impasse over the question of the eucharist. Now Contarini had to become the Papal diplomat again and ensure that Granvella and the politicians did not saddle him and therefore the Pope with all the blame. The first move was for Contarini to petition the Emperor to use his power to force the Evangelical Estates and their theologians to submit. This the Emperor tried by bringing pressure to bear on Philip of Hesse and the representatives of Electoral Saxony but they proved resolute and the pressure was to no avail.

The end finally came with the presentation of the agreed and controverted articles by the collocutors to the Emperor on the 24/25 May 1541. All hope of reconciliation now or in the foreseeable future was dashed. Contarini's crusade had failed, partly because he built it on false expectations and partly because he was not in a position to carry the weight of Rome with him. He was now a confused and spent man. Just how misguided he was at the end can be seen in his reply to Granvella's suggestion that Luther should be asked to join the discussions: "Do what the Holy Spirit leads you to do; but without doubt it would be a matter of the greatest importance if Luther could be won over". (128)

Contarini now came in for a consummate reproof from the curia in which his own performance, judgement and even loyalty were questioned. He had sought peace at too great a cost to the authority and doctrine of the Catholic Church. His room for manoeuvre was totally curtailed. From now on he was to be exclusively the diplomatic representative of the Pope and obey his brief to the letter. Any sign of toleration

for error was a betrayal of the true faith and to tolerate schism would be an open affront to the authority of Rome. He refused to aid the Emperor in his search for a political solution to the German problem. The Emperor and Pope were irreconcilable. War was unthinkable politically but tolerance was unacceptable religiously.

In all this Contarini remained personally eirenic. In a letter to the Cardinal of Burgos on 9 June 1541 Contarini attributed the breakdown in negotiations to human sinfulness generally rather than to that of the Protestants in particular. (129)

To prepare for the future Contarini called a meeting of the German Catholic bishops to deliver an address to them on the future of the Catholic Church in Germany. Here he accepted the reality of the existence of Protestantism as a long term threat rather than a short term schism. He encouraged the bishops to set up schools to stem the flood of German youth into the Evangelical seats of learning. They were to seek learned pastors for their people and devote themselves to visitation to ensure that their flocks were being properly safeguarded. This was a precursor to the spirit of the Catholic Reformation where Protestantism is seen as a threat lurking outside the fold to gobble up the sheep. This was the beginning of the age of belligerence where the purity of the doctrine was upheld against the heretic, the age of the Council of Trent, the Jesuits and the Inquisition.

The Diet finally broke up on 29 July 1541 with all sides reluctantly agreeing to a Recess whereby the Evangelicals were given a certain legal status, allowed to keep the income from Church properties,

set up schools and generally organise religion as they saw fit. The Emperor received limited support for his war with the Turks. Contarini left Regensburg alienated by all sides. For the Evangelicals he represented a tyrannical and deluded Church. For the Emperor he represented a dilatory Pope who was unbending and unwilling to use the power at his disposal to call a free General Council of the Church and thus reform it from within. For Rome he had overstepped his brief, been too compliant and come perilously close to allowing the papacy to be seen to condone divergent beliefs.

Conclusion

The ecclesiastical world of the 16th century was not a place for the timid. Most of the men on the scene at that time were fired with a conviction which led them to intolerance. These "hardliners" had plenty of reason to be suspicious of their opposite numbers. Religion and politics were so closely intermingled that no theological decision was free from its accompanying socio-political consequences.

The existence of men of a conciliatory spirit in this milieu is noteworthy. That such men were involved in the highest level negotiations between various parties is worthy of investigation. This thesis set out to investigate the conciliatory temperament of the age through an investigation of its greatest exponent, Philip Melanchthon. By tracing his own career and his struggle with the problems involved we have followed him through almost every facet of the entire Reformation. We have seen him come to terms with the new learning and its impact on religion. He was converted by contact with Luther and his own theological reflection to become an unshakable proponent of the Evangelical religion. So great was his desire for unity among Christians that he spent his adult life going from one colloquy to another in search of mutual agreement.

Melanchthon was not the only conciliator on the scene but his life and work is well-documented in English. He was central to all discussions and in the course of his life he worked with men of a similar disposition. In particular the names of Martin Bucer and Johann Gropper must be mentioned as eirenic exponents of the Reformed

and Catholic traditions. Within this context Cardinal Gaspar Contarini stands out as the highest ranking Catholic Churchman to devote his efforts to conciliation. The material on Contarini available in English is sparse but it is possible to focus clearly on his activities as the Papal Legate to the Diet of Regensburg.

One aspect of the lot of a conciliator which both Melanchthon and Contarini experienced was to fall under suspicion from their own authorities. Melanchthon was constantly aware of the presence of his brief from Luther and the strictures which it placed on his activities. He was ultimately a spokesman and therefore the bearer of other men's opinions. Many misunderstood his motives and openly denounced him as a traitor to their cause. In general Luther supported him although they too had their disagreements. Within his career Melanchthon was denounced for being both a crypto-Catholic and a crypto-Calvinist. No-one, it would seem, would accept that he acted from the highest motives for the sake of the overall unity of the Church.

In a similar way Contarini was under suspicion from the curia for being willing to give too much ground. It took them a long time before they would agree to his taking any active part in discussions. Even when Rome finally agreed to send him as Legate to Regensburg his brief was severely curtailed. His activities there resulted in a severe rebuke from the curia which could have led to his disgrace and denunciation had he not pulled back to the agreed position. It would seem inevitable that, at a time of extremes, those who strive for the middle ground will be attacked on all sides.

Melanchthon and Contarini both had been trained as humanists and this is reflected in their assessment of the need to educate men to understand the truth of religion. Contarini believed that the Protestant doctrine of justification was based on a misunderstanding of Catholic doctrine. Melanchthon saw the poor education of the clergy as a fundamental cause of widespread corruption. They both reflect the desire of Erasmus to purify religion by a return to the sources and conscientious study.

It has been clear from this exposition that a signal mark of the conciliator is his ability to distinguish the fundamental precepts of religion from incidentals. All the conciliators who have been looked at shared the disposition to give ground to their opponents to the utmost limit that fidelity to the truth would permit. The discussions at the Diet of Regensburg can be cited as an example where Contarini was willing to concede on unimportant issues but had finally to hold fast to the doctrine of transubstantiation even though he knew that such a stand would wreck any chance of agreement. Melanchthon too grasped quite clearly that his conscience would not permit him to agree to anything approaching an abiding physical presence of Christ in the elements. It should be noted that their own consciences were the final guides for both men. They did not hold back simply because they knew that they would not get a controverted agreement ratified by their respective authorities; the constraint was not the agreement of men but the will of God.

It is impossible to compare Melanchthon and Contarini as conciliators. Melanchthon was involved in every major discussion of

his day while Contarini only burst onto the scene for the Diet of Regensburg. Even here Contarini was not a free agent. He could not participate directly in the discussions but had to be content with steering the Catholic party by use of his nightly briefings. The fact that it was his only venture into front line conciliation was a handicap too in that he was not used to the cut and thrust of exchange and he allowed himself falsely to estimate the extent of his knowledge of the Evangelical position. Lying behind his attempts in Regensburg was the attitude of the Pope and curia who were still failing to face up to the enormity of the challenge to religion which the Evangelicals posed. Rome was still out of touch with the front line of the negotiations and content to send Contarini as a token gesture to appease the Emperor but with no powers of his own and no intention on the part of his masters to concede significant ground.

This brings us to the final and sad point about front line conciliators. They are not free agents who are able to deliver their host communities' consent to a negotiated settlement. The picture of one man who is able to square an agreement with his conscience and thus change the collective scene is erroneous. The front line spokesman is ultimately powerless. He can only negotiate and then hope to convince his masters of the facts as he sees them and the weight of his own interpretation of possibilities. In the end it is the leaders of religion who have the final power and in the nature of things they tend to be conservative rather than conciliators.

Notes

1. c.f. R.H. Bainton, Erasmus of Christendom, London, 1969, p58-62.
2. Erasmus, De Libero Arbitrio, 1524
Luther, De Servo Arbitrio, 1525
3. Erasmi Epistolae, 1642, XIX, 50
4. cf. C.R. I, 321, 1083
5. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.30
6. R.H. Bainton, Here I stand, Nashville, 1950, p.71
7. De Corrigendis adolescentiae studiis, C.R. II, 15-25
8. quoted in Manschreck, Q.R., p.49-50
9. C.R. I, 138 (quoted in Manschreck, Q.R. p.51)
10. from Suppl. Mel. VI, 1, p.87 (Hill, S.W. p.38)
11. quoted by Stupperich, Mel., p.55
12. C.R. I, 421-440
13. C.R. I, 456-458
14. According to Manschreck, Q.R. ch.5
15. C.R. I, 477-481 (trans. Hill, S.W.)
16. quoted by Stupperich, Mel., p.57
17. C.R. I, 540-541
18. Erlangen, Sermons, 28:202-260
19. C.R. I, 593-594
20. C.R. I, 684 (Manschreck, Q.R. p.95)
21. Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, London, 1964, p.60
22. Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, London, 1964, p.60
23. Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, London, 1964, p.61
24. Giesler, trans. Smith, Vol. IV, 114-116 (quoted in Richard, P. Mel. p.146)
25. according to Manschreck, Q.R. p.129 (cf. Smith, Correspondence, II, 324f)
26. according to Stupperich, Mel. p.66
27. S.T.I.30.2.c.
28. Thomas has "Tres sunt qui testimonium dant in caelo, Pater, Verbum et Spiritus Sanctus" but the original has "ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ υἱὸν καὶ τὸ αἶμα καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἐν εἰδὶν."
29. Quoted in Owen Chadwick, The Reformation, Penguin 1975, p33
30. The authors were probably Ulrich von Hutten and Crotus Rubianus
31. Erasmi Epistolae, 1642, XIX, 50
32. Available in Reu, A.C.
33. cf. Reu, A.C. No.59
34. cf. note 5
35. Stupperich, Mel., p.64
36. Kidd, Documents, No 104 (cf. Reu, A.C. No.3)
37. Kidd, Documents, No 106 (cf. Reu, A.C. No.4)
38. Reu, A.C., No.5
39. Reu, A.C., No.6
40. Reu, A.C., No.15
41. Cited in Manschreck, Q.R. p.176
42. see versions in Reu, A.C., No.19
43. Much of Luther's correspondence at this time is translated in Reu, A.C.
44. Reu, A.C., No.22
45. in particular see W. Maurer, Melanchthon as author of the Augsburg Confession, in Lutheran World, Vol. VIII, 1960, p.153-167
46. The texts of the drafts can be seen in Reu, A.C.
47. Reu, A.C., No.34
48. See Reu, A.C., No.37,38 for German (trans. The Book of Concord, ed. T.G. Tappert, Philadelphia, 1959)

49. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.85
50. Roemische Quartalschrift, 17, 401
51. C.R. II, 169f (trans. Reu, A.C. p.127)
52. C.R. II, 172f
53. Reu, A.C., No.48
54. Reu, A.C., No.50
55. Stupperich, Mel., p.88
56. C.R. II, 248 (trans. Richard, P.Mel. p.212f) (517 words but publ. in 1898)
57. Reu, A.C., No.51
58. Reu, A.C., No.52
59. trans. The Book of Concord, ed. T.G. Tappert, Philadelphia, 1959
60. trans. The Book of Concord, ed. T.G. Tappert, Philadelphia, 1959, p.287-335
61. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.108
62. see discussion in Stupperich, Mel., p.108-109
63. C.R. III, 765 (trans. Hill, S.W.)
64. trans. Hill, S.W. p.150
65. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.114
66. see "The debate between Eck and Melanchthon on original sin at the Colloquy of Worms", H. Mackensen, Lutheran Quarterly, XI, 1959, p.42-56 (original in C.R. IV, 33-78)
67. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.116
68. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.117
69. according to Richard, P. Mel. p.292
70. quoted in Richard, P. Mel., p.292
71. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.122
72. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.128
73. trans. The Book of Concord, ed. H.E. Jacobs, Vol.II (publ. G.W. Frederick 1882-1883)
74. trans. Reu., A.C., No.54
75. Reu, A.C., No.55
76. cited in Stupperich, Mel., p.148
77. C.R. I, 931
78. Mtt. 19:14
79. C.R. I, 955 seqq.
80. Mk. 16:16
81. Brief an Friedrich Myconius, quoted in Wappler, Die stellung Kursachsens, 13
82. Gutachten an den Kurfürsten Johann von Sachsen, reported in Wappler, Die stellung Kursachsens...zur Täuferbewegung, 25-27
83. Etliche Propositiones wider die lehr der Widerteuffer, Gestelt durch Philip Melanchthon (1535)
84. text: C.R. II, 999
85. Brief an den Kurfürsten Johann von Sachsen, quoted in Wappler, Die Täuferbewegung in Thüringen, p.149
86. Wiedertäufermandat für Kursachsen, quoted by Wappler, Die Täuferbewegung in Thüringen, p.152-153
87. printed in: Walsch, Luther's Sämtliche Schriften, cols. 1706-1725
88. Das Weltliche Oberkeitt den Widertauffern mit Leiblicher straff zu weren schuldig sey, (Wittenberg, 1536) in Neff: Mennonitisches, Lexicon III, p.68f
89. Prozess wie es soll gehalten werden mit den Wiedertäuffern (Worms 1557), printed in Bossert: Quellen zur Geschichte der Wiedertäuffer (Leipzig 1930) I Band, 161-168
90. Reu, A.C., No.8
91. quoted in Stupperich, Mel., p.81
92. Reu, A.C., No.9
93. De Trinitatis erroribus, Libra VIII, 1531 (trans. E.M. Wilbur, Harvard Theological Studies, XVI, 1932)
94. Loci 1535, Article on Infant Baptism (trans. Richard, P. Mel. p.241)

95. Loci 1535, Article on Lord's Supper (trans. Richard, P. Mel. p.246)
96. Stupperich, Mel., p.97
97. Baccalaureate Thesis, September 1519 (trans. Hill, S.W.)
98. Melanchthon to Bucer at Strassburg (cited in Stupperich, Mel., p.106)
99. cf. Carl Schmidt, Philipp Melanchthon, Elberfeld, 1861, p.318-319
100. Vitus Ludwig von Seckendorf, History of Lutheranism, Frankfurt and Leipzig, 1692 (Latin) iii, 8, XXVIII (trans. Richard, P. Mel. p.250)
101. Martin Luther's Briefe, ed. Wilhelm Martin, Leberecht de Witte, Berlin, 1825-1829, Vol.4, p.569 (trans. Manschreck, Q.R. p.233)
102. C.R. II, 822 (trans. Richard, P. Mel., p.251)
103. cf. C.R. II, 807
104. C.R. II, 808 (trans. Manschreck, Q.R. p.234)
105. C.R. II, 837 (trans. Richard, P. Mel., p.252)
106. Kostlin, Martin Luther, II, p.349 (Manschreck, Q.R. p.236)
107. C.R. III, 75 (trans. Manschreck, Q.R. p.273)
108. Schmitt, Phillipp Melanchthon, p.371 (trans. Manschreck, Q.R. p.235)
109. Reu, A.C. No.53
110. quoted by Manschreck, Q.R. p.241
111. quoted by Manschreck, Q.R. p.241
112. Manschreck, Q.R. p.242
113. Stupperich, Mel., p.99
114. C.R. VII, 898 (trans. Richard. P. Mel p.358)
115. C.R. XXIII, 87 et seqq (TRANS Richard, P. Mel. p.359)
116. cr Arts. V and X in Loci 1555 (trans C.L. Manschreck, Melanchton on Christian Doctrine, New York, 1965)
117. C.L. Manschreck, The Rôle of Melanchthon in the Adiaphora Controversy, in Archiv fur Reformationsgeschichte XLVIII, 1957, p.180
118. Confutatio Articulorum seu Questionum Lutheri
119. Farnese/Paul III, 21 April 1540, Nuntiaturberichte ans Deutschland I, p.187
120. Pole/Contarini, 8 June 1539, p.157-159
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121. Matheson, C.C.R., p.19
122. Lenz M. ed., Briefwechsel Landgraf Philipps des Grossmüthigen von Hessen mit Bucer, Leipzig, 1880-1891, Vol. I., p.274-279
123. Dittrich, Regesten und Briefe Contarinis, p.358
124. Mel., C.R. IV, 239
125. quoted in Matheson, C.C.R., p.103
126. text: C.R. IV, 198-201
127. Matheson, C.C.R., p.130 et seq.
128. quoted in Matheson, C.C.R., p.143
129. text: Morandi G. ed., Monamenti di Vavia Letteratura Bologna, 1797-1804, I, ii, 175-6

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